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## A new school for a new press

**On 4 September 2006, the School of Advanced Journalism was opened in Chişinău. This project is initiated by the Independent Journalism Center and aims at supplementing the existing system of preparation of journalists in Moldova.**

### Situation in the field

The interest in training journalists is continuously growing in Moldova. Future media specialists are prepared at four higher education institutions in the country, which have specialized faculties or departments. These are the State University of Moldova, Free International University, European Studies University and Comrat State University. Nevertheless, a deficit of well-qualified journalists is felt on the Moldovan media market. Many periodical publications and radio and TV stations feel forced to hire people without the necessary background to whom, many times, they must teach the fundamentals of journalism, along with the recent graduates of specialized faculties.

The quality of education offered by the universities, which prepare journalists leaves much to be desired for various reasons. The small salaries and large amount of work are not attractive for the field specialists. Faculties are left today with old-time professors who do not know

the new principles of activity of the media and offer to the students useless history lessons and old theory rather than current media operation principles. The young professors employed at the faculties do not have the necessary experience in mass media, and the examples they bring are many times learnt by heart from books, have not been tried out in our press and are not credible. If we should refer to the active journalists invited to deliver certain lectures within the specialized faculties, we notice in them a lack of subject teaching methodology and, sometimes, their classes turn into an "excursion" through the media.

Journalism is a very practical profession and in close connection with the development of the society. Any lagging behind produces big handicaps to those who practice it, and things are much more serious if we are dealing with beginners. Today, we are far from having the faculties endowed with the technical equipment used in editorial offices and possibilities of improvising the realities therefrom. Therefore, young journalists, upon graduation, must take everything from the beginning, this time independently and on their own account. I have met many graduates who could not get a job in the media nor accommodate to the editorial room realities because, according to them, the university taught them only theory, and not how to apply it in their daily activity after graduation.



*Fifty-two persons from various regions of Moldova, including Transnistria and TAU Gagauzia, showed an interest in advanced journalism studies*

### An attempt to change things

Corina Cepoi, Director of the School of Advanced Journalism and project author, says that what media managers need is not the Ministry of Education's stamp, but professionals<sup>1</sup>. The School focuses on practical skills and has as its target group people with university degrees that work or would like to work in mass media. Corina Cepoi emphasizes that the project idea arose eight years ago, when media managers started to be confronted with a shortage of specialists "skilled at working in a media organization"<sup>2</sup>.

The sporadic trainings for journalists and seminars for the development of the Moldovan press in the last ten years have not brought the expected results to the Moldovan media. The development of the media market in Moldova requires a sustained and long change. It is necessary that the press matures and the approached problems are better understood in order to be solved. Corina Cepoi said in an article published on the website of the International Journalists' Network that a change into better of the Moldovan press can only take place if 20 well-trained journalists enter the field every year<sup>3</sup>.

### Specifics of advanced training

The standards of graduate journalism training have been applied and showed good results in Georgia (Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Media Plan Institute), Serbia (Novi Sad School of Journalism), Macedonia (Macedonian Institute for Media) and in other countries, where schools similar to the one inaugurated recently in Chişinău have been open for many years. The experience of these countries' colleges as well as the studies pursued by the author of the Chişinău project, Corina Cepoi, at the University of Missouri in the United States of America, laid the foundation of the training process at the Chişinău School of Advanced Journalism.

The new institution was opened in partnership with the Missouri University School of Journalism and Paris Center for Professional Formation of Journalists. Alongside these main organizations, which will put their signatures on the graduation certificates issued by the School of Advanced Journalism, several Western media organizations contributed to the inauguration of Chişinău School, among which Press Now from the Netherlands, International Center for Journalists, Radio Free Europe and others.

The courses taught at the School are based on practical exercises. Each student will have the possibility to observe by himself/herself how mass media work, starting with the writing of simple news and up to the most modern types

of press management. The School has a modern technical base, which is identical to the one existing in the newsrooms of Moldovan newspapers and radio and TV stations. At the same time, the students have the possibility to work with technical means that are not yet in the endowment of local journalists.

The curriculum includes several modules whose duration is dictated by the importance of one course or another for the exercise of the profession of journalist. The first month of studies was dedicated to News, as the genre that lies at the basis of mass media. Besides elementary concepts about this genre, the students had the possibility to learn how subjects of articles are chosen, the angle of approach, the work with sources, and the structure of press articles. Other two as important modules were Photojournalism and Media Law. The first one aimed at introducing the students to the specifics of press photography, and the second one – to the fundamentals of the legislation and good practice of the activity of mass media: access to information; freedom of expression; defamation; informational security of the society and of the individual; constitution, reorganization and liquidation of media companies etc.<sup>4</sup>.

For the first semester, there are also planned courses on radio and television, opinion writing, community journalism and general concepts of media management. After the winter break, the students will have courses in online journalism, investigative journalism, writing features on business, culture, science etc. The studies at the Chişinău School of Advanced Journalism also include a four-week internship at a media institution within the country and writing a professional project, which will be the school graduation paper.

The model chosen by the Chişinău School of Advanced Journalism is one able to prepare universal journalists within 11 months, as long as the training program lasts. This model was selected as a result of many observations of the media phenomenon in Moldova, which proved that Moldovan journalists must meet many requirements and be able to work at several types of media, which is characteristic of transition societies.

### Instructors

During the last three years, the Independent Journalism Center has organized many training courses for the professors from specialized faculties and for professional journalists, during which they learned modern subject teaching methods. About 20 Moldovan specialists have visited within this project the University of Missouri, which has one of the oldest journalism faculties in the United States of America. During those visits, the Moldovan professors and journalists attended various lectures and practical classes on the training of future jour-

1. Timpul, 27 September 2006, Interview "We will shortly change the quality of journalism in Moldova";

2. idem;

3. <http://ijnet.org/Director.aspx?P=DiscussionArticle&ID=305399&LID=1>;

4. <http://scoaladejournalism.md/dreptul.php>.





*In the past three years, many American journalism professors have been on working visits to Chişinău where they organized seminars and round tables with the future trainers of the Advanced Journalism School*

nalists. They also made an exchange of teaching programs and methods.

During the past three years, many American journalism professors have come on working visits to Chişinău and organized seminars and round tables with the future instructors of the School of Advanced Journalism. Two American experts – one is editor at “New York Times”, the other one teaches at the Hofstra University from New York – are still providing assistance to the local professors with the organization and teaching of courses within the School. In the future, instructors from the Netherlands and France will be invited to teach.

Most of the local instructors who teach at the School of Advanced Journalism are experienced specialists whose names are known to all media consumers in Moldova. They are directors of periodical publications and radio stations, journalists at the mass media that have asserted themselves on the media market due to the correctness and professionalism in their activity. Among these, I would mention Vasile Botnaru from Radio Free Europe, Alina Radu from “Ziarul de Gardă”, Alexandru Canţâr from BBC radio station, Artur Gorghencea from Pro TV, and others.

### First class

I want a fruitful career in journalism, said one of the 20 students who are part of the first class of the School of Advanced

Journalism. This year, 52 individuals from various regions of Moldova, including Transnistria and TAU Gagauzia, showed interest in advanced journalism education. The Interim Director of the Independent Journalism Center, Corina Cepoi, says that the best students were selected on a contest basis. “We first evaluated the application forms and the candidates received marks on each component thereof; then they took a test, which included three exercises, whose results were evaluated by local and foreign experts”<sup>5</sup>.

Only six, out of the total number of students, had graduated from a journalism faculty, while the others are graduates of various faculties – from medicine to engineering. Nonetheless, most of them have experience with the media. Some of them worked or continue to work with various publications and radio and television stations.

When asked why they think advanced studies in journalism are necessary, the students said that they would like to understand better what they have got used to doing already intuitively, which would give them more security. Those with a journalistic background said that they want to learn more practical things, which had not been included in the university curricula. “Continuous training is necessary at the level of thinking, language, techniques of dissemination of information that is truly important to the public, content systematization techniques – to be able to render much information in a few words”, writes in her letter of motivation one of the current students at the School of Advanced Journalism.

5. <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=40805>

Steven KNOWLTON

## Pack journalism

**During the six months that my wife, Karen Freeman, and I have been working as Knight International Journalism Fellows in Moldova, we have been humbled by the dedication of journalists facing daunting problems, frustrated by the slow pace of change and excited by the possibilities for the future. Most days, all three, sometimes all at once.**

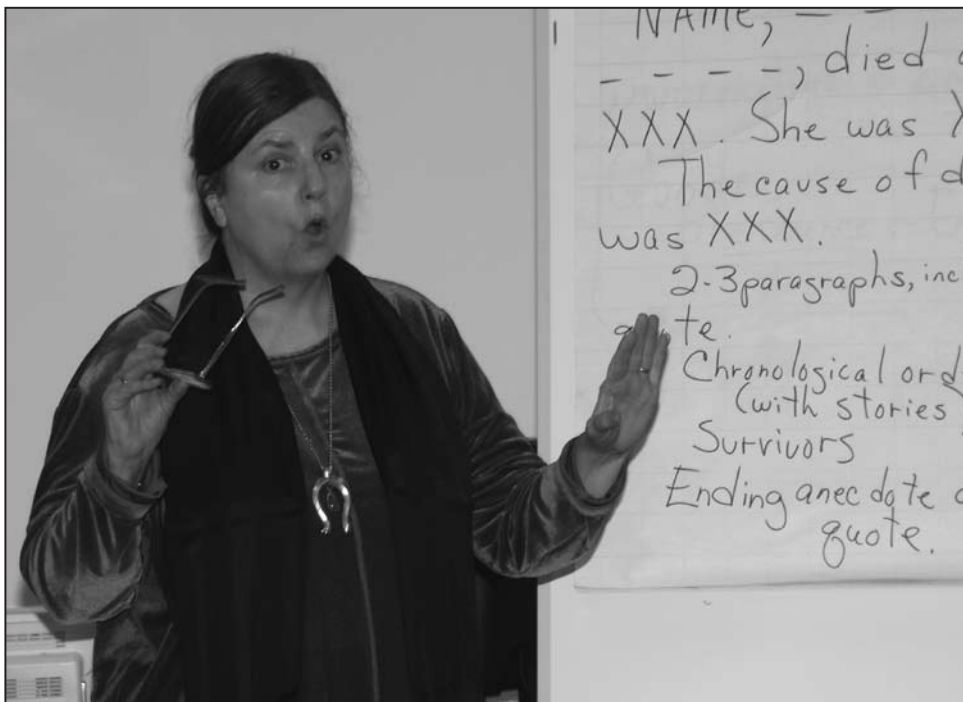
Our task when we arrived was to work with Moldovan journalists where we could and, especially, work with Corina Cepoi at the Independent Journalism Center to establish the Chisinau School of Advanced Journalism. As veteran journalists and veteran journalism educators, we thought the job would be tough, all right, but were confident we could make serious progress and make it at the pace that suits frenetic New Yorkers.

Thanks in large measure to years of preparatory work already done by Moldovans and their friends and supporters in Europe and the United States, the school opened in early September with 20 students taking on a rigorous curriculum of reporting, writing, editing, photographing and engaging in many other facets of high-quality journalism as it is practiced in the West in the 21st century. The demands on the students are enormous. The intention is to replicate, insofar as possible, an entire two- or two-and-a-half-year

Western-style journalism program and do it in 10 months. At this point, deep into the first semester, we can point to substantial successes and notable failures. The successes have come largely through the students' willingness to work hard at skills and concepts that are frequently alien to them. Three months into the program, it is fair to say that all the students in the program have a better idea than they had 90 days about journalism that meets international standards. The school is still very much a work in progress – and certainly will remain so long after this academic year is over. The failures have been notable as well. These are in part my own failure of imagination – failing to understand how profound the differences between the journalism I've lived with for 40 years and the journalism practiced here. There are virtually no models for students to emulate of the aggressive but fair reporting and clean, crisp writing that are the hallmarks of the best of Western journalism.

And I underestimated, I think, the power of the state, the residual mindset of life in the Soviet Union and the absence within the citizenry of the bedrock democratic conviction that government can and must be made to do the bidding of the citizenry. Government exists to serve the people not to try to master them.

Yet within the school and in the too-few successful independent news organizations there are many people of truly



*Karen L. Freeman, Knight fellow, assists local professors with organizing and teaching courses at the School*

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extraordinary dedication to trying to learn how to succeed in Western-style journalism here in Moldova. It is humbling to work among them because two things we largely take for granted in the West – the money to publish and the freedom to publish – are too-often lacking in Moldova. Publishing is a public service, to be sure, but it is also a business and must be so if it is to do its job. Even if the government had both the money and the will to provide major subsidies to the press, it would be dangerous, quite probably fatal, to independent journalism to accept it. So publishing requires income that has to come from either subscribers or advertisers. And in an economy as precarious as that of Moldova, the advertising revenue for consumer goods seems inadequate to support a thriving news business.

And while the laws in Moldova concerning journalists and their rights of access to political documents are strong, all too often they are flouted in reality. Taking a lawmaker to court can be done, but the journalists rarely win until the matter gets to the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. And that, of course, is a lengthy and expensive proposition. It has happened and it continues to happen and doubtless both journalism and the public it serves are better for those suits. But as a practical matter, most journalists with daily and weekly deadlines are not going to take the months out of their careers needed to sue the government over access to documents.

But for all the setbacks, it is positively exhilarating to be part of the metamorphosis of journalism in Moldova. Here are a few concrete suggestions I think journalists here should think about:

### **Pack journalism**

Pack journalism is a derogatory term frequently used in the United States to suggest journalists traveling in packs like wild dogs or hyenas. The image is of reporters, often but not always television reporters with their crews and all their equipment, showing up in droves to encamp on the lawn of someone who happens to be newsworthy at the moment. But pack journalism also means journalists following the lead of other journalists, of following up on and advancing stories that their colleagues at other papers stations and papers break. A little pack journalism could help in Moldova. When a paper or station breaks a good story about, say, corruption or a governmental abuse of power, if the other papers and stations would follow up on that story, it would vastly increase the power of the press to be a force for change. Remember: The chief purpose of journalism is to monitor the doings of government and

important private institutions and report on how they are doing to the citizens. It is only with such reporting that the citizens can know whether to reward the governors with further terms in office, to instruct them to change their behavior, or to drive them from office entirely. The shorthand term for this crucial function of journalism is the watchdog. Currently in Moldova, when a paper or station gets a good story, we have one dog barking. It is easy to ignore – or to silence – one dog. It is impossible to ignore a pack of barking dogs.

### **News you can use**

People read newspapers and watch television news for a lot of reasons. They want and need to know about politics, to be sure. Keeping government honest is journalism's most essential function and it must not be ignored. But readers like other kinds of stories as well and a paper or station interesting in building reader interest will generate tons of them. This does not mean scouring the sewers for celebrity gossip and sensational crime stories. It does mean getting out of the government office blocs and beyond the news conferences of politicians and into the streets where people live. It means getting to know and understand the life of a trolleybus driver as well as that of his passengers. It means spending time in lyceums and in shops and parks, getting to know people and their every day lives and then writing about them. It means covering health, education, safety, child-rearing, economics, travel, technology and all the other things that people want to know about. You do not have to pander or titillate in order to be interesting and informative.

### **Photographs**

Sadly, photojournalism is far less advanced in Moldova than it is in many Western countries. By international standards, there are too few photographs used at all, and far too many of the ones that are used are speech and meeting pictures – one or 10 or 25 people, usually in business attire, standing at a lecture or sitting around a table talking. It is hard to imagine much less interesting visually. Sometimes these are genuine news events, which deserve coverage and maybe even with a camera. But such photos make up a major part of Moldovan photo coverage, way more than is effective. Every paper should have at least one and ideally several full-time, well-trained photographers who are given the space to show off their talents. Photojournalism not only adds a great deal of information to a newspaper. It draws readers like a magnet.

Olivia PÎRȚAC

## Broadcast Code: whereto?

**The Broadcast Code, adopted on 27 July 2006, represents the result of a long process of political fights and debates, with the active involvement in the latter of the Moldovan civil society and international organizations. The Code came into effect on 18 August 2006 (when it was published in *Monitorul Oficial* no. 131-133) and abrogated the 1995 Audiovisual Law and the Law on the National Public Broadcasting Company “Teleradio-Moldova”, adopted in July 2002.**

Does this legislative innovation represent a change into better or into worse? Can we answer or can we not answer this question today? Time will show if this Code progressively stimulates the Moldovan audiovisual; today, we can only make some value judgments.

### A different kind of Broadcasting Coordination Council of the Audiovisual?

The key aspect in the regulation of the audiovisual is how the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual (BCC) looks like, who its members are and whether they are remunerated. What counts is the professional, moral integrity and independence of BCC members. What counts less is who elects the BCC members, whether the best, in good faith, are elected, and

whether the “elector” follows or not self-interest. The formula, which existed until recently in Moldova functions pretty well in France: three members are elected by the President’s Office, three by the Parliament and three by the Government. The new audiovisual law adopted a more advanced formula in relation with the danger of “politicizing” the voting: the candidates are proposed by the civil society and the Parliament confirms them with 3/5 of its Members’ votes.

Unfortunately, although the existing legal formula could be used to elect the best of the candidates indeed to BCC, in practice however, the Moldovan political class is not mature enough to allow for the election of a professional and apolitical BCC. It seems that the parties ruling today in Moldova have chosen a legal formula that would allow to elect a convenient to them make-up of the BCC. Thus, the fact that the candidates may be proposed by “public associations, foundations, trade union associations, employers’ associations, religious creeds” (Art. 42 of the Code) seems to be an excess of democracy, because the ruling political forces can promote any candidate without any problem. It would have been less democratic, but probably better, if only active media NGOs would have been entitled to propose candidates.

After the applications are collected at the Parliament, two parliamentary commissions (the line commission and the legal commission) are responsible for the proper selection of the candidates to be put up for voting in the plenum. In practice,



*Daniela Galai is trying to take a picture of the “effects” of a draughty summer*

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the entire “election” of the first BCC after the Code’s adoption came down to a subjective voting by the members of the Mass Media Commission. The Legal Commission did not participate in the election “of the best”. It looks like, however, the latter checked whether the candidates were eligible according to Art.42 of the Code (are at least 25 years old; have an university degree and at least five years of experience in the field of audiovisual or communication technologies, law, finances, accounting, business management, development of programs or information in any creative institution, speak the state language and have not been convicted) and insisted on the replacement of one of the candidates that did not meet these requirements.

The candidates selected by the Mass Media Commission were voted and obtained the necessary 3/5 votes, although several MPs made public declarations and drew attention to the fact that the selection of BCC members had not entirely been transparent and objective.

The new BCC will be remunerated in its entirety (between 1996-2006, three members out of nine were working and receiving salaries in the best case). This should significantly increase the quality and quantity of activities carried out by BCC. It is a theory that is yet to be demonstrated.

### What does the Code change regarding the public broadcasters?

The concept of “public broadcaster” appeared first in Art.7 of the 1995 Audiovisual Law, which equated the concepts of “state” and “public”, which the Council of Europe considers, in its recommendations, totally opposite: *“The State Company ‘Teleradio-Moldova’ is a public service broadcaster and cannot be privatized”*. Later, in 2002, obliged by the circumstances, the public opinion found out that there is a difference in broadcasting between the terms “state” and “public”, and that this difference is principled: *“But public service broadcasting organizations are characterized, unlike state broadcasting organizations, by the fact that they carry out their missions independently, without interference from any external authority, especially from the public authorities, which distinguishes them from state broadcasting organizations. This principle of independence of public service broadcasters, whose obvious consequence is that such broadcasters are responsible before the public for the way they fulfill their missions, is a cardinal condition for the full and entire exercise of such missions, especially in the field of information”* (quoted from the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe No. R (96) 10 to member states on the guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting, adopted on 11 September 1996).

The Law on the National Public Broadcasting Company “Teleradio-Moldova” was adopted on 26 July 2002, which confirmed *de jure* the status of public service broadcaster for this institution. The Council of Observers was constituted as a supreme managing

body, made up of 15 members appointed partially by the authorities and partially by the associative sector. This body was intended to be independent from the political factors, and its task was to follow and ensure that “Teleradio-Moldova” fulfilled its mission of public broadcaster in accordance with its objectives, indicated concisely, but clearly and sufficiently, in the Law No.1320-XV of 26 July 2002. Unfortunately, the 2002 Law did not offer to “Teleradio-Moldova” also the hope for funding that would be independent from the state authorities, or for the establishment of a system of direct invoicing of the population, which undermined the Company’s independence. Its independence was undermined to the same extent by the fact that the ruling party found the possibility to promote people loyal thereto to the Council of Observers (which was carrying out its activity on public bases), through some pro-governmental entities of the associative sector, and especially by the fact that, under the mask of implementation of legal norms, the inconvenient professionals were filtered out from the creative staff (absurdly, but it was the well-known journalists who did not pass the contest). The Company also had as management bodies the Administrative Council, the President and the Vice President – General Producer.

The Audiovisual Code reduced even more the guarantees of independence of “Teleradio-Moldova” as public broadcaster (legal status preserved, however, to the Company). Although the Code’s chapter “on how the Company should be” is very productive and rich in statements (sometimes confusing: *“The Company has the following attributions: ... g) observance of the journalists’ right to develop, and consequently, to observe the deontological code of the journalist, specifying the professional norms of activity in the field”* (Art.51, para.(1)), under the excuse that the previous type of management was inefficient, the Parliament decided, however, to reduce the number of members of the Administrative Council by six persons and to change the procedure of appointment thereof: there will be nine persons appointed by the Parliament now. The Parliament will elect from 18 persons selected by BCC, which, in its turn, will select the 18 persons from the total number of applicants that will have submitted their applications to BCC. As a stimulus to submit an application to BCC could serve the fact that, although the members of the Council of Observers will this time not be remunerated on a permanent basis, they will receive an honorarium for each attended meeting.

Thus, if the members of the Council of Observers were previously appointed as follows: seven directly by various entities of the associative sector, one by the editorial staff, two by the Parliament (one by the opposition), two by the President of the Republic of Moldova, two by the Government, and one by the Supreme Council of Magistrates, all of them will now be appointed by the Parliament after a preliminary screening conducted by BCC. In addition, the Code dissolved the Administrative Council and transformed the Company’s President into the sole manager of the Company, to be assisted in the creation process by the Television Director and Radio Director.

The provisions on the Company's funding did not change much: the main source will be the subsidies from the state budget. None of the alternatives that would have allowed for direct funding from the taxpayers were accepted. The Company "will beg" for money each year, which will be provided to it depending probably on how "obedient" it will be. Nonetheless, the Code has a positive innovation with regards to the public broadcaster; it introduced a new concept for the Moldovan legislation and practice: the task book. *"The task book consists of two different parts: the financial plan and the statement of the program policy (for the Company and, separately, for every program service) which make up the basis for ensuring the transparency and public support in the activities of the Company, as well as for approving the annual budget"*(Art.62 of the Code). Thus, this document will make it clear what the Company's expenses are, what programs it has and how much they cost, as well as what funding various types of the Company's projects require.

The Audiovisual Code restricts the existence of regional and local public broadcasters. The 1995 Audiovisual Law had provided for certain freedom: the local governments also could obtain broadcasting licenses and create television and radio stations, which were essentially funded from the local public money and from advertising and sponsorship. Such stations did either not have legal personality or were "municipal companies", which was making them sensitive from editorial independence aspect, or, *de jure*, there were no guarantees. The experts supported the need for the legal regulation of the "local public broadcaster" phenomenon and of some guarantees for their editorial independence, which materialized in a draft law prepared by APEL. Thus, a legal status similar to that of the national public broadcaster ("Teleradio-Moldova") was being proposed for those institutions.

However, by adopting the Code, the Parliament decided that only 2 public broadcasters will exist in Moldova: one at national level (which may include in its structure *"public territorial offices, other functional autonomous units"* (Art.51 para.(4)) and one at regional level: *"the regional public broadcasting company "Teleradio-Gagauzia" operates in the Gagauz Administrative Territorial Unit in accordance with this Code, based on the decision of its General Public Assembly"* (Art.65 para.(1)). Also, it was provided that a regional public broadcaster will be set up in the future *"in the districts on the left bank of Nistru River after the settlement of the Transnistrian problem, as decided by the regional public authorities"* (Art.65 para.(2)).

What will happen to the other broadcasters funded from the local public money? In principle, the Code does not specify this, but we can admit 3 options: 1) they will disappear; 2) will change their legal status and will become "private broadcasters", according to a procedure that is in no form explained by the Code; or 3) will be subordinated in one way or another to "Teleradio-Moldova" according to a procedure or principles not clarified by the Code. What the Code says is, however, that: *"(5) Within two months*

*from the date of its formation, the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual shall initiate the control of existing program services and of the legitimacy of the licences issued to their holders, including the control of the broadcasters founded and funded by the local governments; it shall develop recommendations regarding the legitimacy acquiring mechanisms, so that not to allow for their dissolution, but on the contrary, to ensure the creation of a pluralist environment for the development of the audiovisual field. (6) The local governments – founders of audiovisual institutions will issue decisions regarding the reorganization of such institutions within three months, in accordance with this Code."* (Art.68). In conclusion, the Code says nothing but that the development of the reform decided in the Parliament is further the BCC's task.

### Positive changes in the process of licensing of private broadcasters...

The licensing in the field of audiovisual essentially means obtaining the right to broadcast a program service and to use, for this purpose, technical means of telecommunication and one or more radio-electric frequencies. Both through the Audiovisual Law and through the Audiovisual Code, a distinction was made between a) the licensing of program services to be broadcasted by means of ground radio-electric waves and b) the licensing of program services to be broadcasted by any telecommunication means other than ground radio-electric waves. Hereinafter, we will refer to the licensing of program services to be broadcasted by means of ground radio-electric waves, because this is the area where more problems have been registered in Moldova, and the Audiovisual Code lays down a series of innovations in this regard.

The Audiovisual Law provided that the applicant had to obtain four documents within the licensing process: 1) preliminary technical approval – according to the 1999 amendments to the Audiovisual Law, the approval was to be issued to the applicant by BCC, which in its turn was to obtain it from the specialized central public administration authority (Art.1 and Art.15 para.(2)); 2) broadcasting license – was issued to the applicant by BCC on a contest basis (Art.1 and Art.15 para.(2)); 3) technical license – was issued to the applicant by the specialized central public administration authority (Art.1); 4) decision of authorization – was issued to the applicant by BCC (Art.1 and Art.10, Art.17 para.(1), Art.19).

The Audiovisual Code has preserved only two documents: the broadcasting license and the technical license. Specialist in the field, including the members of the first two BCC make-ups, declared themselves many times on the inutility of the old *preliminary technical approval*. The preservation of the *authorization decision* in the new licensing process had, again, no justification. The old authorization decision determined the moment when the broadcasting license and the technical license began to produce legal effects, that is... it validated the rights provided for by those two licenses. The *preliminary technical approval* and



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 September 2006**



authorization decision were, in essence, absurd documents. The elimination of these two documents from the licensing process also eliminates, in our opinion, potential sources of corrupt actions on behalf of BCC (including on behalf of its apparatus).

Salutary are certain innovations in the Audiovisual Code: extension of the term of the radio broadcasting license from three to seven years, and of the TV broadcasting license from five to seven years (Art.23 para.(5)); possibility to extend the term of the broadcasting license (at the holder's request) if the license holder observes the legislation in force and the conditions provided for in the broadcasting license (Art.24); possibility to assign the broadcasting license to a third party, provided that the new holder assumes all the obligations deriving from the license (we hope, however, that the assignment will not become a "source of profit" for a certain category of people).

The problem of alignment of the Moldovan legislation on broadcaster licensing to the international and European standards must be regarded from the point of view of the autonomy of the Moldovan Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual, whose members must be guarantors of the public interest and must not represent the interests of a political (ruling) party. Art.23 para.(1) of the Audiovisual Code stipulates: "Broadcasting licenses for the broadcast of program services by means of ground radio-electric waves are issued by the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual on a contest basis". See the comment above.

### **More national and European products with the adoption of the Audiovisual Code?**

Broadcasting of European audiovisual works. Art.3 of the Audiovisual Code aims at promoting the broadcasting of European works (originating from the Republic of Moldova, Eu-

ropean Union or other member states of the European Convention on Cross-border Television), so that they account for a "significant proportion" of the broadcasting by the Moldovan broadcasters. This article is applicable only to the broadcasters whose coverage exceeds 60% of Moldova's territory, or they are part of a national network (Art.3 para.(10)). This article seems to be exclusively dedicated to "pleasing" the European experts and the pro-European rhetoric. At the same time, this article (Art.3 para.(7)) comes in collision with the spirit of the European Convention on Cross-border Television, because according to Art.10 of the Convention, the Republic of Moldova undertook to contribute to reserving a majority proportion of the broadcasting time to European audiovisual works, without laying down the condition "From the date of accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union ...".

Protection of linguistic, cultural and national heritage. Art.11 involves two categories of obligations: a) obligations about whose observance we will be able to speak in January 2010 (e.g.: Art.11 para.(1) "As from 1 January 2010 ..."). We will come back with details in January 2010; b) obligations that are not observed at present (e.g. Art.11 para.(7): "Feature and documentary films shall be presented with voice-over or subtitles, with preservation of the original sound track, whereas the films for children shall be dubbed or voiced-over in the state language." We hope these obligations will be applied earlier than in 2010.

### **The Audiovisual Code: legal over-regulation of the field?**

The first reading of the Audiovisual Code does not surprise as much by volume (the field of audiovisual is a complex, difficult and important one, and so, it was expected to have a larger document), as by language and regulated aspects. If the

Audiovisual Law and the Law that regulated the legal status of “Teleradio-Moldova” Company had an adequate legal language, then the Audiovisual Code is in many aspects more like a Deontological Code or a journalism textbook than a law. The Code abounds in fine norms—journalism lessons. For example, Art. 7 (Political and social balance and pluralism) stipulates: *“(1) In the spirit of observance of fundamental human freedoms and rights, the political and social pluralism, the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, the information, education and entertainment of the public is carried out and guaranteed by means of broadcasting and relaying program services. (2) When offering airtime to a political party or movement for the promotion of their positions, the broadcaster should also offer, within the same type of programs and hours, airtime to other political parties and movements without any ungrounded delays and without favouring a certain party, regardless of the percentage of its representation in the Parliament. (3) In order to encourage and facilitate the pluralist expression of opinion trends, the broadcasters must cover the elections in an equitable, balanced, and impartial way. The concepts of broadcasters on the coverage of electoral campaigns are to be approved by the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual and to be presented to the Central Electoral Commission in strict compliance with the legislation in force. (4) In order to ensure the observance of the principles of social and political balance, equidistance and objectivity within the broadcasters’ news programs, they shall place each news report so that: a) the information content of the news is truthful; b) the reality is not distorted by means of editing tricks, comments, wording or headlines; c) in case of subjects related with conflict situations, the principle of several-source information is observed. (5) In order to protect the political, social and cultural pluralism and diversity, the property concentration is limited to dimensions that would ensure economic efficiency but that would not generate dominant positions in the building of the public opinion”. When referring to public broadcasters, the obligations are embellished with other strong words: “development, production, broadcasting of... pluralistic, impartial and innovative programs marked by their high quality and program integrity, aimed at ensuring the correct, impartial, equidistant information of the consumers observing the principle of political balance, freedom of expression, of creation and of beliefs...” (Art.51, letter a)).*

I am not claiming that such provisions will harm the local audiovisual (nor will they help it either...); I am only saying that a law must be concise in attributes, contain adequate wording, whose interpretation should be univocal. It seems that somebody wanted to impress us by creativity or to confuse us, to convince us that this Code was well-intentioned... (*“honest, faithful and equidistant broadcasting of information within newscasts”* (Art.51, letter e)) of the Code).

Legal regulation must appear only where it is strictly necessary; for the rest, social relations must be directed only by ethical, technical, religious etc. norms. There is a general tendency in Moldova to over-regulate, argued, including by good-willed



**Journalism is a very practical profession closely related to the development of society. Journalism School students during a computer-based documentation exercise**

people, through the fact that if something is not regulated, it is abused of... But where will this take us? I think that, in Moldova, it is necessary to improve the self-regulation mechanisms and exclude professional ethics norms from the legislation in force.

### **The Audiovisual Code: a step forward?**

Unfortunately, we are compelled to conclude that, at present, taking into account the huge amount of accumulated information (expert examinations, experience, studies), the Audiovisual Code is a pretty weak law, with many confusing provisions, which does not comply with the best practices in the field. The saddest thing is that this Code does not look like this because we deserve it, that is, because we lack qualified experts, capable of editing a good law, but because it was drafted and adopted as a political document, and not with the best intentions for this country's population.



# STANDARDS and RECOMMENDATIONS in BROADCASTING

**The central role of broadcast media as source of information determines the dominant governments and economic interests to obtain the control thereon. Often, the public broadcasting organizations operate as a “mouthpiece” of the authorities instead of serving the public interest.**

On the other hand, private broadcasters are taking an increasingly important role, which has led to the appearance of an entire range of control mechanisms. Governments exercise their control through the license-granting process, whereas the commercial interests attempt to monopolize the broadcasting sector, focusing on low-quality, but profitable, programs.

In order to cope with such dangers and for the broadcasting to be free of government or commercial interferences, there have been developed principles establishing a number of standards on the procedure of promotion and protection of independent broadcast media, ensuring at the same time satisfaction of people's interests by the broadcasting organizations. Guidelines for broadcasters as well for the member states can be found in a number of acts (recommendations, treaties, conventions) developed under the aegis of the Council of Europe and, therefore, are also applicable in the Republic of Moldova.

## I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### Editorial independence

The principle of editorial independence, by which the decisions on programs are made by broadcasting professionals, based on professional criteria and on people's right to be informed. In particular, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CMCE) has adopted **Recommendation no. R (96) 10**, which guarantees the independence of the public service broadcasting: *The programming activities of public service broadcasting organizations shall not be subject to any form of censorship. No a priori control of the activities of public service broadcasting organizations shall be exercised by external persons or bodies except in exceptional cases provided for by law... The legal framework governing public service broadcasting organizations should stipulate that their boards of management are solely responsible for the day-to-day operation of their organization.*

The decision-making regarding the materials to be broadcast must rest with the broadcasting staff, and not with the governments, regulatory bodies or commercial society.

### Diversity promotion

Diversity involves, in general, the pluralism of the broadcasting organizations, of the types of ownership of such organizations as well as of the methods of expression, views and languages in which programs are broadcast. In particular, diversity involves the existence of a large spectrum of independent stations and programs, which represent and reflect the society as a whole.

*“Member states should consider possible measures to ensure that a variety of media content reflecting different political and cultural views is made available to the public. Such measures could for instance be to require in broadcasting licenses that a certain volume of original programs, in particular as regards news and current affairs, is produced or commissioned by broadcasters.” (CMCE Recommendation no. R (99) 1 “On Measures to Promote Media Pluralism”).*

In the sense of this Recommendation, the concept of “media pluralism” is understood as a diversity of the offer, reflected, for instance, in the existence of a *multiplicity of autonomous and independent media outlets* (which in general is called structural pluralism), as well as of a *diversity of the types of media and contents (views and opinions) made available to the public.*

*“Member states could consider the possibility of introducing, with a view to enhancing media pluralism and diversity, direct or indirect financial support schemes for both the print and broadcast media, in particular at the regional and local levels.”* Consequently, the State has the obligation to promote active measures for the promotion of the growth and development of broadcasting, and to ensure the unfolding of this process until an utmost diversity is set in place.

## II. REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

### Guarantees of independence

All public regulatory authorities for the broadcasting sector must be protected against interferences, especially of political or commercial nature. Their institutional autonomy and independence must be guaranteed and protected by law. *“The rules governing regulatory authorities for the broadcasting sector should be defined so as to protect them against any interference, in particular by political forces or economic interests. For this purpose, specific rules should be defined as regards incompatibilities in order to avoid that regulatory authorities are under the influence of political power, members of regulatory authori-*

*ties exercise functions or hold interests in enterprises or other organizations in the media or related sectors, which might lead to a conflict of interest in connection with membership of the regulatory authority” (CMCE Recommendation no. R (2000) 23 “On the Independence and Functions of Regulatory Authorities for the Broadcasting Sector”).*

### Composition

The Recommendation provides that members of regulatory authorities are appointed in a democratic and transparent manner. The term “democratic” should be understood in the broad meaning, as the members of regulatory authorities are sometimes elected, other times appointed by the public authorities or named by non-governmental organizations, representatives of various interests, think-tanks and political and socio-professional scopes existing in the society. Regardless of the procedure, the regulatory authority must reasonably represent the society as a whole, and must not be dominated by a certain group or political party. General composition. At the same time, the Recommendation clearly provides that the members of such authorities “*may not receive any mandate or take any instructions from any person or body*”.

### Powers and competence

The granting of licenses is considered by the Recommendation as one of the essential tasks of regulatory authorities. It involves great responsibility, as the selection of the operators to be entitled to provide broadcasting services will determine the more or less balanced and pluralist character of the broadcasting sector. “*The regulations governing the broadcasting licensing procedure should be clear and precise and should be applied in an open, transparent and impartial manner. The decisions made by the regulatory authorities in this context should be subject to adequate publicity.*” The Recommendation extends the exigen-

cy of transparency, stipulating that the license-granting procedures should be open for examination by the public.

Another essential function of regulatory authorities should be monitoring compliance with the conditions laid down in law and in the licenses granted to broadcasters. The authorities should, in particular, ensure that broadcasters respect the basic principles laid down in the **European Convention on Transfrontier Television (ECTT)**, and in particular those defined in Article 7, which refers to the broadcaster’s responsibility. This article stipulates that all programs, as concerns their presentation and content, must respect the dignity of the human being and the fundamental rights of others (forbiddance of pornography and of programs inciting violence and racial hatred). The same article forbids the broadcasting of programs likely to impair the physical, mental or moral development of children and adolescents, at hours when these are likely to watch them.

The Recommendation specifies that the regulatory authorities should not exercise a priori control over programming and the monitoring of programs should therefore always take place after the broadcasting of programs. When a broadcaster fails to respect the law or the conditions specified in his license, the regulatory authorities should have the power to impose sanctions, in accordance with the law. “*A range of sanctions which have to be prescribed by law should be available, starting with a warning. Sanctions should be proportionate and should not be decided upon until the broadcaster in question has been given an opportunity to be heard. All sanctions should also be open to review by the competent jurisdictions according to national law.*” As the Recommendation explains, such sanctions may vary, starting with a simple warning, continuing with smaller or larger fines or with temporary suspension of license, and up to the final sanction of withdrawal of license. Taking into account its serious character, this final sanction should be applied only in extreme cases, when a broadcaster commits very serious offences.



*What does the news start with?  
Seminar led by the School's  
academic coordinator,  
Vitalie Dogaru*



The regulatory authorities must also see to it that broadcasters observe the general advertising standards. According to Art.11 of ECTT *“Advertising shall be loyal and fair, it shall not be misleading and shall not prejudice the interests of consumers. Advertising to or using children shall avoid anything likely to harm their interests and shall have regard to their special susceptibilities”*.

The amount of advertising may be subject to certain general limits, but they should not be so pressing as to undermine the development and growth of the advertising sector as a whole. ECTT establishes certain limits for advertising (20% of the daily transmission time), forbids the advertising for tobacco products and subjects to certain restrictions the advertising for alcoholic beverages and medicines. The Convention also provides that *advertising* shall be clearly distinguishable and separate from the other items of the program service. Secret and subliminal advertising is forbidden.

### III. PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

#### Independence

The guideline no.1 of CMCE Recommendation no. R (96) 10 **“On the Guarantee of the Independence of Public Service Broadcasting”** guarantees the editorial independence and institutional autonomy of public broadcasters, providing a non-exhaustive list of various areas in which the supervisory bodies of the broadcasting organizations must be able to act freely, without the interference of external authorities. Editorial independence means *the right of public service broadcasting organizations to determine freely, without interference from any external authority, the content of the programs they broadcast, within the limits determined by law or other norms in view of guaranteeing the observance of legitimate rights and interests*. It is also applied in the selection of time schedules for various programs as well as in the selection of persons participating in the programs. Editorial independence assumes that no external public or private authority may interfere in the daily operation of public service broadcasting organizations, for instance, by means of exercising financial decision-making power with regards to such organizations.

The Recommendation recalls in this sense the principle of the **Resolution on the Future of Public Service Broadcasting** (adopted within the 4<sup>th</sup> European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy, Prague, 7-8 November 1994), according to which *“the daily management as well as the editorial responsibility to develop schedules of programs and the content of programs must exclusively depend on the broadcasters themselves”*. The editorial independence has as obvious consequence the institutional autonomy of the public service broadcasting organizations, and respectively, the right of such

*organizations to organize and manage freely their activities, within the limits set by law and other norms, especially with regards to the responsibility of the management and control bodies of such organizations*.

Guideline no.3 of the same recommendation evokes a fundamental principle for the independence of the public service broadcasting organizations. *The programming activities of public service broadcasting organizations shall not be subject to any form of censorship*.

*No a priori control of the activities of public service broadcasting organizations shall be exercised by external persons or bodies except in exceptional cases provided for by law*.

#### Funding

In the sense of the Recommendation no. R (96) 10, public stations must be adequately funded through mechanisms that would protect them against arbitrary interferences with their budgets based on the principle according to which *member states undertake to maintain and, where necessary, establish an appropriate, secure and transparent funding framework which guarantees public service broadcasting organizations the means necessary to accomplish their missions*. Where the funding of a public service broadcasting organization is based either entirely or in part on a regular or exceptional contribution from the state budget or on a license fee, it should be ensured that *“the decision-making power of authorities external to the public service broadcasting organization in question regarding its funding should not be used to exert, directly or indirectly, any influence over the editorial independence and institutional autonomy of the organization”*. The Recommendation makes reference to the particular case of Central and Eastern European countries, which should discuss the problem of switching from funding based on public loans (subsidies) to funding disconnected from government intervention (fees, advertising etc.).

#### Missions

Public stations should be required, in the general public's interest, to promote diversity in broadcasting by offering a broad range of information, educational, cultural and entertainment programs. Guideline no.20 of Recommendation no. R (96) 10 recalls the fundamental principle affirmed in Article 7, paragraph 3 of ECTT (responsibilities of the broadcaster). This principle should be imposed the more on public service broadcasting organizations, taking into account that, as it is emphasized by Resolution no. 1 of Prague Ministerial Conference, they must *“provide a forum for public discussion in which as broad a spectrum as possible of views and opinions can be expressed”* and *“broadcast impartial and independent information and comment”*.

Angela SÎRBU

# EU regulations on transparency and access to information: main provisions and effects<sup>1</sup>

**The transparency and fair competition issues can be regulated by national legislation of each European Union Member State.**

Yet national laws and practices have to comply with common EU regulations, required by the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community. The current paper analyzes the main European Commission, European Parliament and European Council regulations aimed at ensuring both transparency of public funds use in media support and access to public information:

- Commission Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings, 25 June 1980;
- Commission Directive 2000/52/EC amending Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings, 26 July 2000;
- Commission Directive 2005/81/EC amending Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings as well as on financial transparency within certain undertakings, 28 November 2005;
- Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting (2001/C 320/04);
- Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information.

## 1. The requirements

### A. Transparency

In general terms, the transparency regulations refer to the financial relations between the public authorities<sup>2</sup> and public undertakings<sup>3</sup>, as well as to financial relations within undertakings.

The rules are intended to ensure that these relations are transparent and cover the following aspects:

- the modes of public financing (direct or indirect);
- the types of financing (e.g. operating loss set-offs, provision of capital, non-refundable grants, or loans on privileged terms, compensation for financial burdens imposed by the public authorities);
- the use of public funds;
- the availability of information about all relevant financial operations;
- the necessity of separate cost and revenue accounts associated with different activities.

More specifically, the directives 80/723/EEC, 2000/52/EC and 2005/81/EC require Member States to ensure that financial relations between public authorities and public undertakings are transparent, so that the following emerge clearly:

- (a) public funds made available directly by public authorities to the public undertakings concerned;
- (b) public funds made available by public authorities through the intermediary of public undertakings or financial institutions;
- (c) the use to which these public funds are actually put<sup>4</sup>.

Both public and private companies could benefit from public funds. The Commission regulations<sup>5</sup> aim at ensuring that there is no unjustified discrimination between public and private undertakings in the application of competition rules. In order to have detailed data about the internal financial and organizational structure of public and private undertakings, the Commission regulations<sup>6</sup> require the creation of separate and reliable accounts relating to different activities carried out by the same undertaking.

The Member States must ensure that the following will emerge clearly from these accounts, in particular:

- the costs and revenues associated with different activities

1. The paper is elaborated within the project "EU Documents affecting the Media", developed by the Center for Independent Journalism – CIJ Bucharest as part of the South East European Network for Professionalization of the Media (SEENPM) calendar of activities.

2. The Commission Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings defines "public authorities" as "all public authorities, including the State and regional, local and all other territorial authorities".

3. The Commission Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings defines "public undertakings" as "any undertaking over which the public authorities may exercise directly or

indirectly a dominant influence by virtue of their ownership of it, their financial participation therein, or the rules which govern it".

4. The Commission Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings.

5. Commission Directive 2000/52/EC amending Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings.

6. Commission Directive 2000/52/EC amending Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings and Commission Directive 2005/81/EC amending Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings as well as on financial transparency within certain undertakings.



- full details of the methods by which costs and revenues are assigned or allocated to different activities.

Also, Member States must ensure that information concerning these financial relations will be kept and made available to the Commission for five years from the end of the financial year in which the public funds were made available to the public undertakings concerned. However, where the same funds are used during a subsequent financial year, the five-year time limit shall run from the end of that financial year.

### **B. Access to public information**

While pursuing the same general goals as the directives 80/723/EEC, 2000/52/EC and 2005/81/EC, namely to increase transparency and ensure observation of competition rules, the directive 2003/98/EC on the re-use of public-sector information focuses on the establishment of a minimum set of rules and the practical means for re-using<sup>7</sup> existing documents<sup>8</sup> held by public-sector bodies<sup>9</sup>. The latter directive regulates:

- conditions (including practical arrangements facilitating the search) and timeframes for processing requests for re-use of public information
- charging principles
- licensing procedures
- non-discrimination and exclusive arrangement issues.

The specific obligations of the state bodies under this regulation<sup>10</sup> are:

- to process the requests for re-use within a reasonable time; where no time limits are established, state bodies will process the request and deliver the information within 20 working days. When the requests are complex, 20 more days can be used, while the applicant shall be notified about time extensions no later than after 3 weeks since the initial request;
- to communicate the reasons for refusal, when a request is refused;
- to make sure that the policy on fees/prices charged for the information (where it exists) is transparent; the charge must not exceed the cost of collecting, producing, reproducing and disseminating the information, together with a reasonable return on investment;

7. According to the directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information - 're-use' means the use by persons or legal entities of documents held by public-sector bodies, for commercial or non-commercial purposes other than the initial purpose within the public task for which the documents were produced. Exchange of documents between public-sector bodies purely in pursuit of their public tasks does not constitute re-use.

8. Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information defines 'document' as (a) any content whatever its medium (written on paper or stored in electronic form or as sound, visual or audio-visual recording); (b) any part of such content.

9. According to the directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information 'public-sector body' means the State, regional or local authorities,

- ensure that practical arrangements are in place to facilitate the search for documents available for re-use, such as asset lists, accessible preferably online, of main documents, and portal sites that are linked to decentralized asset lists;
- to guarantee that non-discrimination rules are applied when the information is used by different actors (both private and public);
- to ensure that contracts or other arrangements between the public-sector bodies holding the documents and third parties do not grant exclusive rights. If exclusive rights are necessary, state bodies will review every 3 years the reasons allowing for these exclusive right. The exclusive arrangements will be transparent and public.

## **2. Who is affected and how?**

The analyzed documents are compulsory for all EU and EEA countries<sup>11</sup>.

The directives 80/723/EEC, 2000/52/EC and 2005/81/EC affect all beneficiaries of public funds in those countries. In theory all media types (print and electronic) can be affected. But in practice the implications are more visible when it comes to the Public Service Broadcasters (PSB). The Commission states explicitly that PSB financing is a form of State aid: "any transfer of State resources to a certain undertaking - also when covering net costs of public service obligations - has to be regarded as State aid"<sup>12</sup>. The financing of PSBs is important since it is "a way to ensure the coverage of a number of areas and the satisfaction of needs that private operators would not necessarily fulfill to the optimal extent."<sup>13</sup> Yet Member States will also make sure that financing of PSBs or other businesses entrusted with the operation of services of general economic interest will not affect competition in the relevant markets (e.g. advertising, acquisition and/or sale of programmes).

The Commission allows discretion to Member States to define and organize the funding of public service broadcasting organizations<sup>14</sup>, but requires the observation of trading conditions and competition in the Community and the common interest. At the same time "the realization of the remit of that

bodies governed by public law and associations formed by one or several such authorities or one or several such bodies governed by public law

10. Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information.

11. European Economic Area (EEA) includes the 25 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

12. Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting (2001/C 320/04). P. 19.

13. Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting (2001/C 320/04).

14. Directive 2000/52/EC amending Directive 80/723/EEC on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings quotes the Treaty establishing the European Community and the interpretative provisions annexed to the Treaty by the Protocol on the system of public broadcasting in the Member States.

public service shall be taken into account.” The definition of the “public remit” or “public service mandate” is also left up to the Member States. However, the definition has to include the Commissions’ concepts and values and has to be as precise as possible so that the Commission can monitor how Member States comply with its regulations, while Member states can monitor PSB performance. Although it is not up to the Commission to judge the quality of certain programmes, it is expected that PSBs will provide balanced and varied programming “consistent with the objective of fulfilling the democratic, social and cultural needs of a particular society and guaranteeing pluralism, including cultural and linguistic diversity.”<sup>15</sup> The Commission stresses the importance and effectiveness of having a genuinely independently appointed body which is going to supervise the quality standards.

The directive 2003/98/EC affects the state, regional or local authorities that hold documents concerning not only the political process but also the legal and administrative process and have the obligation to make them available in order to guarantee the public’s right to know, which is a fundamental principle of democracy. Also, it affects persons or legal entities wishing to access public documents for commercial or non-commercial purposes.

### 3. Effects

If adopted and implemented by states preparing or wishing to join European Union, the analyzed regulations can have a positive impact on media markets by making them more transparent and making media outlets more accountable.

- The transparency in public funding of the media **could reduce and eventually do away with state-owned print media** in the countries where such outlets still exist (e.g. the Republic of Moldova, Serbia). Governments may find themselves in a situation when financing media outlets in a transparent manner is not convenient because the desired propagandistic effects can no longer be achieved. As a result, there will be more chances for pluralism and fair competition on media markets. In the Republic of Moldova, the lack of transparency on media ownership and public funding of the press made it possible for the governing party to maintain control over local newspapers financed by local public authorities. By means of public funding, the governing party controls up to 25 from more than 40 local newspapers. The publications supported by the authorities enjoy privileged conditions on the advertising market, at the ex-

pense of independent media outlets. They receive advertising contracts from public bodies as well as from private companies under pressure from the authorities. In 2005, the state media privatization process has started. Moldovan cabinet decided to withdraw as a founder of government-founded national newspapers - the Romanian-language “Moldova Suverana” and the Russian-language “Nezavisimaya Moldova”. In practice, the state newspapers have only changed their insignia, thus becoming “independent”, but continuing the same editorial policy that serves the government. There is no credible information on whether Government continues to finance those newspapers. But is known that they maintain their offices for a symbolic rent fee in a state building and they pay less than private media to the state owned printing house.

- The transparency in public funding of the media **could create equal condition for all media outlets to receive state advertisement funds from government institutions**. Romania has seen numerous scandals concerning the lack of transparency of public funds spent on state advertisement. These practices, regarded as a powerful tool of controlling media, came to an end in May 2005. Under pressure from civil society, the new Romanian Government proposed regulation, adopted eventually by Parliament, which introduced a new master contract for state advertisement and obliged authorities to make public any contract on state advertisement signed with media organizations.<sup>16</sup> According to the monitoring report conducted by Romanian Center for Independent Journalism, one year since new legislation has been in place, the level of state advertisement dropped dramatically, almost four times. Although there is no clear evidence of the lack of political will to implement the reform, the report finds that the legal reform is not being implemented properly due to the lack of administrative capacities.<sup>17</sup>
- While state aid for public broadcasting is seen as a tool to make quality programmes for every segment of the audience and to avoid “commercialization”, it can also have **perverse effects**. Firstly, it can **affect fair competition on the internal media market**. Even when financed by the state, public broadcasters are tempted to enter into market competition. Public-service broadcasters are compromising quality to compete with commercial channels, but, at the same time, many of them depend on governments or political parties. These developments jeopardize broadcasting pluralism and diversity, the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe being subject to the highest risk.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, state aid

15. Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting (2001/C 320/04). P. 33.

16. The regulation was initially elaborated by a working group consisted of Center for Independent Journalism, The Agency for Press Monitoring (Agentia de Monitorizare a Presei), Romania Press Club (Clubul Roman de Presa) and TV industry professionals as well as Government experts.

17. The report “Publicitatea de stat – un an de transparenta”, June 26, 2006, <http://www.cji.ro/rh/raport.doc>

18. The report Television Across Europe: Regulation, Policy and Independence, published by OSI’s EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) and Media Program. The report covers 20 European countries—EU members, candidates, and potential candidates—from U.K. to Turkey, and from Romania to France.





*Svetlana Nejelscaia is speaking with the subject of an article on agriculture*

for public broadcasters could damage the free trade between Member States. This is clearly the position as regards the acquisition and sale of programme rights, which often takes place at an international level. Advertising, too, in the case of public broadcasters who are allowed to sell advertising space, has a cross-border effect, especially for homogeneous linguistic areas across national boundaries.<sup>19</sup>

- The transparency of public funding of the media and equal access to information could increase the investments in the media sector. The last Media Sustainability Index published by IREX shows that foreign investments in the media have been growing, bringing infusions of capital and business expertise in several countries from South-eastern Europe which did start the process of negotiating European Union accession.<sup>20</sup>
- The implementation of access to information provisions can contribute to the opening up of public institutions and reduce the secrecy around public information in the region. However, considerable efforts to secure access to public information are still needed. In the Republic of Moldova, after six years of existence of the law on access to information, some public institutions have started to be more open, e.g. the Parliament adopted decisions to publish the minutes of the Parliament's plenary sessions and a newly elaborated draft law on the Transparency of Decision-Making is about to be approved. As the Access to Information Directive projects, it can create conditions for the development of services based on public-sector information as

an important primary material for digital-content products and cross-border cooperation. Wider possibilities of re-using public-sector information should among other things allow European companies to exploit its potential and contribute to economic growth and job creation.<sup>21</sup>

- The main negative effect in the countries preparing or wishing to join EU could be the formal, declarative implementation/application of EU regulations by the governments in the SEE region, not followed up by necessary administrative reforms. The monitoring that the Commission conducts of candidate countries shows that despite the fact that legislation was largely in line with the Community *acquis* and administrative structures were in place, the monitored countries needed to take further measures to increase the administrative capacity of their regulatory authorities and ensure that the legislative framework is implemented effectively and in full transparency.<sup>22</sup> In Moldova, the communist majority in the Parliament felt under pressure from the Council of Europe and opposition to give up the political control of the state owned radio and television. The Parliament has adopted in 2002 a law namely to set it free from the state control. In reality, under the pretext of reformation, the government cleaned national broadcaster of uncomfortable staff, while the editorial policy remains the same. The lack of transparency of the way the newly created PSB is financed allows Moldovan government to keep also financial control over it. The reform at the state radio and TV stations is not over yet. In July 2006, the Parliament

19. Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting (2001/C 320/04).

20. IREX, Report: Media Sustainability Index 2005.

21. Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public

sector information.

21. Bulgaria. Commission Report, October 2004. <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/e20101.htm>.

22. Bulgaria. Commission Report, October 2004. <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/e20101.htm>.

adopted in a rush the new Broadcast Code. It stipulates the way the management of the stations and the Broadcasting Coordination Council (BCC) are formed. Despite the encouraging rhetoric, the Parliament practically excluded the civil society from the elaboration of the newly adopted Broadcast Code<sup>23</sup>. Although the Code provides that professional and nongovernmental organizations will delegate representatives in the BCC, the civil society is concerned that its recommendations will be ignored by the Parliament, which is supposed to vote to approve each candidate.

#### 4. Deadlines

The Member States are supposed to make effective the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the requirements of the last amendments to *directive 80/723/EEC* by 19 December 2006 at the latest. While the deadline for adjusting the legislation to *directive 2003/98/EC* on the re-use of public-sector information expired on 1 July 2005. The Commission will monitor the application of *directive 2003/98/EC* till 1 July 2008. When adopting the measures required by the Commission directives, Member States have the obligation to refer to the relevant EU documents. The deadlines for the candidate states are subject to negotiation on a case by case basis.

#### 5. What states and the media community/professionals can do?

All the countries in the region stated the European integration as their main goal. To achieve this goal these countries are supposed to fully implement the *aqui communautaire*, including all the regulations in the media field. So far, the practice shows that only pressures from outside can persuade the authorities in SEE countries to comply with their commitments.

As the regard of the EU regulations analyzed in this paper, are expected:

- to show genuine political will and support for nongovernmental organizations which can contribute to the implementation of EU standards in the media field;

- to create special working groups, formed by government representatives, opposition, nongovernmental and professional organizations, to examine the *Commission Directives on the transparency of financial relations between Member States and public undertakings as well as on financial transparency within certain undertakings, the Communication from the Commission on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting, and the Directive on the re-use of public sector information* and to propose all needed amendments of the national laws;
- to coordinate with European Commission legal reforms proposed by working groups;
- to establish a clear timetable for the endorsement and implementation of the proposals made by the working groups;
- to create all the conditions for a proper monitoring by the civil society and European Commission of the implementation of the adopted laws;
- to create equal economic conditions for the press: denationalize/privatize the local state press by auction, where it exists; encourage local and international investments in the media.<sup>24</sup>

#### The media community and civil society can:

- participate in the working groups established in order to amend national legislation in accordance with EU regulations;
- monitor the endorsement and implementation of the proposed legal reforms;
- work with authorities to train the public servants responsible for implementation of transparency and access to information laws;
- improve the cross border cooperation for better exchange of experience in implementation of the EU standards on transparency of public funds in media field and access to public information;
- to inform periodically European Commission and request the Commission to exercise pressure on state authorities in order to achieve required legal and administrative reforms and to ensure transparency of the use of public funds and access to public information.<sup>25</sup>

23. Concerns raised in a joint statement by the Association of Independent Press, the Moldovan Journalists' Union, the Press Freedom Committee and the Independent Journalism Center, 14 August, 2006. <http://ijc.md/en/>.

24. The Republic of Moldova is one of the countries where foreign investments in the media did not yet arrive. Among the reasons is uncomely legislation. According to the Moldovan press law, adopted in 1995, foreigners can hold no more than 49% of statutory capital of a periodical publication or a press agency, while they have no right to lead a print media institution.

25. A recent report assessing the implementation by Moldovan authorities of their commitments under the "Moldova – EU Action Plan" shows

that broadcast legislation has not improved, media are still divided into "pro- and anti-government" outlets, whereas old technologies continue to be used even by newly-created organizations. The report highlights authorities' influence over the national broadcaster and states that no real transformation has taken place in the former government-owned publications. The authors recommend, among other things, continuing international monitoring of the situation in this field. ("Euromonitor", issue Nr. 3, July 2006, Expert Grup" and the Association for Participatory Democracy (ADEPT), <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/euromonitor03.pdf>).



Raisa LOZINSCHI

## Cable television: realities and perspectives

**The panorama of the audiovisual in Moldova is pretty wide, but it is poorly represented on the entire country's territory – 38 local TV channels, one of which is national, 43 radio stations, one of which with national coverage and several with broad coverage, 154 cable operators, 80 of which are located in the country's villages, and nine MMDS-based TV operators.**

### Inflow of applications

In the past 16 years, the Moldovan broadcast field has developed slowly but steadily. Taking into consideration the data provided by the Broadcast Coordinating Council (BCC), it is cable TV that developed most rapidly, especially in the past four years. According to Victor Pulbere, Consultant of the BCC Department for Expert Examination, Licensing and Monitoring, in 2002, cable TV operators were present only in Chişinău, Bălţi and in some district centers. Beginning with 2002, an avalanche of applications started to come in, in view of obtaining a license for this type of activity. Thus, BCC issued by 40 new licenses in 2004 and 2005, and about 20-30 in 2003. The number of such applications has decreased since October 2005. This year, BCC has issued only ten licenses to cable operators. "There are no applications because most of the large localities, where this business is profitable, have already been

connected to cable TV", Pulbere explains the decrease in the number of applications.

### Highest competition registered in Chişinău

The biggest "struggle" for eventual clients of TV cable is fought in Chişinău, where there are around 20 cable operators. "BCC issues licenses to all applicants, especially in towns where the number of population is high. As to villages, especially small ones, we do not recommend that several operators start their businesses in one locality, but at the same time, we do not have the right to prevent them from doing so. The law does not forbid it and if the applicants meet all the requirements, we must issue licenses to all of them", the Head of the BCC Department for Expert Examination, Licensing and Monitoring, Arhip Cibotaru told us.

Some apartment blocks in Chişinău may happen to be connected to three or four operators, which displeases their competitors, but is for the clients' benefit. In order to attract clients, the operators are compelled to offer free connection and a monthly fee for the provided services that is lower than of their competitors. Alexei Furdul, director of "Avante TV", company that provides cable TV services in the capital's Râşcani sector, states that some cable operators cheat. "They establish lower prices and spoil the market" Furdul expresses his dissatisfaction.

*The international conference  
"Mass media and the Settlement  
of Conflicts" held  
on 20–21 October 2006, was  
attended by journalists  
from Georgia,  
Bosnia Herzegovina,  
Great Britain and Moldova*



tion. He invested ten thousand dollars in his business several years ago and has not yet recovered his investment. "Avante TV" has 500 clients who pay a monthly fee of 25 or 40 Lei, depending on the number of relayed channels they receive.

### Between Russian and Romanian stations

Most of the channels relayed by the mentioned company are from the Russian Federation. Furdul says that this situation is due to the fact that it is very hard to obtain the distribution of Romanian channels on Moldova's territory, because they buy many films and programs from other countries and are entitled to broadcast them only on the territory up to the Prut River. This fact is refuted by other colleagues of Furdul and by the several representations of Romanian TV stations in Moldova. We conclude that BCC does not have legal power to impose a certain proportion of channels to be relayed by cable operators. "There is no law, but, unofficially, we regulate this. We require that they relay Romanian and Russian stations half-and-half. But there are exceptions depending on the locality where the operator carries out its activity", Arhip Cibotaru informed us. In Ungheni district, however, most of the relayed TV channels are from Romania. Oleg Ivanov, director of "VIT" Ungheni, a company providing services to 33 localities in the district of Ungheni, says that this is what the population wants. "We are near Prut and Romanian channels are in higher demand. We submit our offer to the local councils from mayor's offices and they decide what channels the villagers want to watch", Ivanov says. His company currently relays 14 Romanian programs, six Ukrainian, two Moldovan and the rest, up to 30 – Russian. Although neither Ivanov is satisfied with the profitability of his business, he says that the relay of Romanian stations costs less than that of Russian stations. "To relay the Russian station NTV for a month, you must pay USD 800, RTR Planeta – USD 600. The most expensive Romanian channel is "Mini Max" and costs EUR 400 per month. The price on the rest of Romanian channels varies between USD 70 and 175 per month", Ivanov gives numbers.

### Problems of cable TV operators

The biggest problem encountered by cable operators, besides the fact that the relay of foreign TV stations is expensive and that Moldovans are not crazy about this service, is their obligation to pay the monthly rent for the high-voltage pillars. The license holders broadcasting by cable must install their networks on the electricity pillars, which are in the management of "Union Fenosa" in the center and south of Moldova, and in the management of "Red Nord" in the north of the country. "My monthly income comes to 7,000 Lei, which is made up of the monthly fee

of 25 Lei I collect from my clients. From this money, I must pay 12-15 Lei for the rent of one pillar, and I have 400 pillars, and 4,000 Lei go to the stations I relay on a contract basis, plus the employees' salaries. What do I have left? It is not profitable at all. In Romania, the client pays four-six euros per months for cable television, while in our country – only 25 Lei. Our people are not much attracted to such a service because they do not have money. I want to increase the monthly fee, but I run the risk of losing even the few clients I have", says Nicolae Manic, director of "TV Max", which provides services to 250 households in three villages of Hâncești district.

I asked Mr. Manic why he provides such services if he claims that this business is not profitable. "We are Moldovans, and when we start something, we do not make all the calculations. And then, when we have got our head into something, we cannot pull it back", he answered.

### Operators' relations with BCC

The cable TV operators I spoke with did not characterize in any ways their relation with the BCC. According to Ivanov, BCC comes into the territory and conducts two or three controls per year. "It has not done anything bad to us, but nothing good either", the cable operator from Ungheni says. "It does not help us, but nor does it place obstacles in our way. The controls conducted at my firm were pretty objective", Furdul added. He has proposed many times to BCC to draft a law that would regulate the activity of cable operators, as it is in Russia, for instance. "Our activity is regulated by the BCC and the Law on Telecommunications. But telecommunications are different from television. At the same time, BCC must take care of air television. We have a lot of cable operators in Moldova now and, therefore, a law that would regulate their activity is necessary", Furdul thinks.

### Perspectives of cable television

Arhip Cibotaru says that, with the launching of the "Moldovan village" program, cable television becomes an indispensable element, especially in the rural localities, "alongside the recreation center, hospital, bath-house, if you want". According to Cibotaru, even small villages (to which cable operators do not go today because there are few clients there) will benefit from cable television. Alexei Furdul also thinks that cable TV will not disappear from Moldova. "However, a time will come when the market will strengthen, somebody with a lot of money will come and will buy out all the small operators, will swallow them up", Furdul thinks. And this seems possible, as many cable operators are about to give up their business and sell out on the grounds that it is not profitable.



Petru BOGATU

# Mass media and state authorities

**Motto:** *The press and the government are natural opponents, with different functions, and each of them must respect the role of the other.*

## Government's war against the press

After a decade and a half from the proclamation of independence, the Republic of Moldova remains not only the poorest and most corrupt, but also the most misinformed and lost country in Europe. According to some international estimations made on a yearly basis, the press in our country is not free. Thus, from this point of view, we keep company to some authoritarian or even totalitarian states, such as Zimbabwe, Belarus, Turkmenistan, Cuba or North Korea. And this despite the fact that, formally speaking, Moldova has both a private press and a pluralist political regime, while the general elections are classified by the pan-European institutions as being, on the whole, free.

Regarded from this angle, the situation in our country does not differ too much from that in other countries of the former communist bloc. There, too, after the collapse of the totalitarian regime, free press came into being hard, with big mental and professional health problems. The quasi-general view, shared about ten years ago by the Albanian, Bulgarian, Polish or Slovak authorities, was expressed by Istvan Csurka, one of the leaders of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the ruling party at that time. "Today, he said, only those who control television can indeed state that they are ruling." The roots of this thinking syncope must be searched, according to Peter Gross, not so much at economic or political level, as at the political culture level. The more pronounced the communist "relics" were, the more difficult proves to be the transition from post-communism to genuine democracy.

Nonetheless, unlike Hungary or the Baltic States, which have come to have a free press at present and are members of the European Union, mass media convulsions do not cease in our country. They are now culminating in a so-called process of constitution of the public audiovisual, behind which hides the apogee of a war of attrition fought by the political power against its own people for the control over state and municipal radio and TV stations.

## Communist inheritance

The lamentable situation of Moldovan press may of course be ascribed to the communist inheritance. It is just that our post-soviet political class lacked illuminated minds that would have understood that the power, in the absence of a fact-based independent journalism, does not have a future in an open society either, and would have risen above the scaffolds of the past to promote genuine

democratic standards in as far as mass media is concerned.

All governments prior to the Voronin regime, without exception, aimed at controlling the press. They resorted to all kinds of methods to achieve their purpose, some of them as cynical as perfidious. They sought, for instance, to dominate the print media distribution market. Not by accident do all newspapers today depend on the monopolist "Poșta Moldovei". Or even to wage a merciless war against the undesired journalists. Neither under Mircea Snegur nor under Petru Lucinschi did the governors shrink from firing inconvenient and disobedient professionals, to replace them with docile persons that were to favor the state control over media. In 1994, for example, tens of accomplished journalists were fired from "Teleradio-Moldova" Company, who subsequently asserted themselves in other media, some of them becoming real opinion leaders in their trade. Diacov, Sturza and Braghiș governments repressed the state television and radio professionals. Therefore, Voronin's communists have not been pioneers in matters of repression against mass media. It is only that they have pushed censorship and intolerance up to paroxysm.

## Pocket dog of state authorities

It is surprising that, despite the privatization of print media, commercialization of radio and TV stations, Moldovan mass media do not have the power to surpass in any way the vassalage to the political power. Most of them do not fulfill even now their duty of "watchdog" of the society. Our press is today – at the most – a pocket dog of the state authorities.

Meanwhile, under the pressure of events as well as of Europe, things have changed a little. For instance, a relatively free media market has developed. However, it is not functional at the



*Most of the local trainers who teach at the School of Advanced Journalism are experienced specialists whose names are well known to Moldovans*

moment. The demand and supply mechanisms seem to be out of order; there does not exist, in fact, a loyal competition. In such conditions, it is not those that are the best and most competitive who win, but preeminently the authorities' favorites do.

The market seems to be stuffed with the so-called "hot money", that is, with resources resulted from speculative operations, which, with the state authorities' aid, are directed to some media institutions trusted by the administration. Therefore, obscure and marginal TV stations or newspapers are prospering today, in spite of their small audience and readership.

State authorities have certainly developed along the past years. But not in the sense that they have learned the lessons of democracy. They have rather adapted to the pluralist regime conditions to be able to manipulate the media, from one end to another, from the shadow, by pulling the strings behind the scenes. Taking into account that there already exists a broad private sector, the authorities are obviously not trying to cover the impossible. They do not aim at censoring openly the independent newspapers or radio stations. They seek to use these, sometimes without the latter's knowledge, to strengthen their power. How? Simply. By controlling, on the one hand, the main information flows, and on the other hand, the publicity market.

The communists have, in fact, not invented anything new. They use schemes tested in the Eastern and Central Europe. However, the stage of officials' masked interference with the editorial policy is now in the past there. But it is blooming in our country.

### Coalition between the state and journalists

The lack of adequate funds for a fast and efficient privatization, the researcher Patrick O' Neil writes, creates in the Eastern Europe a fertile land "for a monopolist coalition between the state and some of the media professionals". This is exactly how, for instance, the denationalization of the state dailies "Moldova Suverană" and "Nezavisimaya Moldova" was mimed; their legal status continues to remain ambiguous. One thing is, though, certain. Both publications are rigorously supervised by the President's Office through some newspaperpersons who were appointed to administer them on behalf of the state authorities. Things are the same with some TV stations. NIT or "Pervyi Kanal v Moldove", for example, despite their private status, are in fact affiliated to the government, and they filter the information in such a way, as to be able to broadcast exclusively positive news about the current administration. The same thing can be said about the Chişinău sub-editorial offices of the newspapers "Komsomolskaya pravda" and "Argumenty i facty".

The abusive presence of the state on the informational market perverts even the private and independent media in the end. Why? Because the state authorities highjack the informational flow, turning the media market into a battlefield, where the newspapers, TV and radio stations are reserved the role of

swords, knives, guns or, if you want, cannons from the politicians' endowment. In such circumstances, the Moldovan mass media do not offer to the citizens any longer, as Tocqueville put it, the channels through which they "would talk without seeing each other, and would walk together without meeting". Or, if the information is not correct and verifiable, nor is it generated by a supported public debate, it will come in the end not to clear up things, but to muddle them.

### A paradise of positive information

As a consequence, the Moldovan citizens are deprived of their natural right to know. The information provided to them, no matter how paradoxical this may sound, has a pluralist character. One and the same event is treated totally differently by the media institutions. Let us take, for instance, the news on the government activity. If we should believe the TV station Moldova 1, everything is always O.K. at the top. Days and years pass by, but the president's office or the government never makes a controversial decision, and nothing bad ever happens there. Our authorities are a paradise of positive information. The newspaper "Moldova Suverană" presents things in the same way. However, "Kommersant plus" says something else. And we can find an entirely different version of the event in "Jurnal de Chişinău" or "Timpul". Or, as Revel says, the more pluralist information is, the less it is information. It turns into something else.

And as our market is a front line where the information is murdered from the very beginning, the local journalism is based almost entirely on opinion. On interpretation of facts. On polemics and media attacks. Opinion journalism plays, of course, an important role. But it should not, however, annul the fact-based one. It should not replace information with a comment, as it happens here, not eliminate the public speech whose logic and legitimacy indispensably results from the correct, impartial and equidistant news. Such a press can polish the image of a party or arouse repulsion towards a politician. It is not able, however, to inspire with democratic values, to create a public opinion, because the latter develops only as a result of objective and undistorted information.

The excessive politicizing of press, resulted from the bitterness with which the state authorities want to dominate the informational market, brings about a general distrust. Of the media. But also of the administration. Of the latter, maybe, in the first place. It gives the impression that, no matter what is written, nothing changes. That the state cannot be controlled. That the truth lies at bottom of the sea. That chaos and the law of the jungle rules in the country, where only the strongest can make the most of the situation.

It is just that, by crushing the free press, any government in an open society saws off the bough on which it is sitting. It rides for a fall. It loses its legitimacy, breaking off under the burden of total nihilism, which arises on the ruins of the free press.



Vitali GAIDARJI

# Journalistic ethics in Gagauzian style

**In a democratic society, the mass media are interested in knowing the real public opinion about the moral aspect of the state policy. At present, the media are informing the society about the activity of the state authorities, and the authorities explain, in their turn, what opinion the population has about their way of governing.**

Ideally, the media would tell the politicians what problems the citizens are confronted with, what their opinions, demands and needs are. At the same time, politicians are obliged to inform the society through the media about their plans and decisions. Thus, an interdependence should exist between the journalists and the politicians: the former because they need information, and the latter because they feel the need to convey to the society, through the journalists, their messages and ideas.

As a rule, the politicians and the journalists give the impression that there is no connection between them whatsoever. And this is because the manipulation of the press by the authorities is considered, and with good reason, antidemocratic. This is exactly why the media giving the impression that they are not independent, are less credible in the readers' eyes.

Observing the experience of Gagauzian media and their way of covering the political situation, we should point out their use in electoral campaigns, today's situation having become already a tradition that cannot be changed on the eve of elections.

This situation is first of all related to the fact that practically no truly independent and objective press exists in the Gagauzian Autonomy. Of the few existing TV stations, only the Regional Company's station "Teleradio Gagauzia" has its only broadcasting program, including news, having as its only founder the Gagauzian Executive. The rest of the TV stations, among which the private ones, such as TK "Ani Ai", "ATB", "Bizim Aidinnik" and many others only relay various Russian stations and do not have their own programs, due to which they, as a rule, do not get involved in the electoral campaign and are used only for broadcasting advertisements prepared elsewhere, without becoming active tools in the political fight.

"RTG", the national newspaper "Vesti Gagauzii" ("Gagauzian News"), as well as the district newspapers "Znamya" (Ceadir-Lunga), "Panorama" (Vulcănești) are entirely funded from the regional and, respectively, local budgets. Such a situation is extremely favorable for the state authorities because they manage to hold total control over the most known media institutions in the region.

The opposition newspapers "Edinaya Gagauzia" and "Gagauz Halky" do not accept on their pages anything but critical materials about the official power and do not maintain a constructive dialogue because, de facto, they are committed newspapers, funded by the opposition political forces.

Although we cannot even speak about an objective coverage by media of the situation in Gagauzia in between electoral campaigns, as everything is limited only to official chronicles, on the eve of elections, they either abundantly praise or ex-



*Corina Cepoi,  
director of the School  
of Advanced Journalism  
and project author, at  
the reception for the  
launching the School,  
21 September 2006*

sively criticize some of the electoral candidates and opponents, depending on their political orientation.

Of course, in accordance with the Law on media, they are obliged to cover the electoral process beginning with the decisions adopted by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of TAU Gagauzia, based on a Conception approved by the People's Assembly of Gagauzia, whereas the CEC make-up and constitution can hardly be considered a top democratic achievement in the region, as its make-up first of all includes individuals "devoted" to the authorities.

According to the "equal opportunities" principle, it is also stipulated that radio and TV informative programs should not put in advantage one or another candidate, bloc or party. At the same time, it is obvious, however, that state media journalists carry out, whether they want it or not, the famous function of "collective propagandists and agitators".

If we should meditate on the journalistic ethics, in general, and on the journalistic ethics in Gagauzia, in particular, judging based on a comparison between two rather short periods that cover the latest two electoral campaigns (2002 and 2006), it is impossible not to pose a problem that exceeds this subject, but fully characterizes the journalists' behavior. The question is: who does a journalist feel he is? What does he aim at when making use of his possibilities of expressing himself and his point of view?

The regional media, both print and broadcast, cannot say a word without the approval of the local authorities. An informational cannonade comes down on the society every time when a press scandal is leveled down with another one. At present, the journalists have the possibility to make investigations and launch sensational declarations only if they position themselves on one side or another of the ideological interests of the clans involved in the conflict. In this regard, it is exciting to follow the confrontation of the regional newspaper "Vesti Gagauzii" with the newspaper "Stolitsa Comrat", founded by Comrat Town Hall, in the light of the latest events – the unofficial start of the electoral campaign for the office of Bashkan. "Vesti Gagauzii" criticizes the Mayor of Comrat, whereas "Capitala", which is in the Mayor's subordination, criticizes the regional authorities.

The new Gagauz journalism has turned out to be "a renewed old journalism", but with much more unacceptable manners, insensible to the people that, one way or another, are involved in the confrontations of the journalists who are so dependent on their employers' interests.

Even less important for this "new" type of journalism seem to be those ethical and moral standards, which the people sitting in front of the TV are guided by. The journalists' illusion that what they do is accepted is created by the ratings, which in fact represent only the trend of a mass interest towards what is being broadcast or published by the "yellow" press. These purely formal indices say nothing

about the estimations made according to moral and ethical principles.

The journalists have the feeling that they are the owners of some information, which they can formulate depending on the pursued goals. An example of such a way of presenting information can serve the editorial policy of "RTG", condemned to endless praising of the regional authorities and their achievements. In this context, I cannot help recalling the fact that the request of the newspaper "Edinaya Gagauzia" for accreditation of its correspondents under the executive body of the People's Assembly was denied. The coverage of the activity of these structures remains an exclusive privilege of the state controlled media.

The ordinary electors need a balanced point of view now more than ever. The Journalist's Professional Ethics Code does not contain any provisions that would allow a journalist to reveal the incorrect working methods of another journalist. And still, we wonder whether it is ethical to leave 178 thousand inhabitants of Gagauzia at the mercy of some group interests, denying them the right to an unbiased point of view or to a truthful analysis of events.

We must admit that it is rather difficult at present to speak about the existence in Gagauzia of an adequate point of view regarding the extent to which the ethics of the modern Gagauz journalism corresponds to the ethical standards of the majority of the citizens in the region. No surveys have been conducted in Gagauzia in this area.

Thus, we can comfort ourselves with the thought that the crisis through which the Gagauz media are going through now is not unique and reflects certain global processes. However, as long as the journalists in this region are not able to realize how much they have departed from the expectations of those who follow them, no statements whatsoever will make it possible to surpass the crisis.

The Gagauz journalism needs a shock, because the professional ethics and morals in this area have come to produce irritation and disappointment among the citizens. Although there is no illustrative statistics, many journalists are not even aware of how different their viewpoint can be from the citizens' opinion. And it is hard to imagine that the situation will change during the Bashkan elections.

Why have so many books and articles been written about politics and mass media in the Western countries? Why are scientific and popularization papers written permanently on this subject? There are many reasons for this, but the most important one is that the level of democratization of a government depends on this process. The control over the media guarantees the maintenance of power. Keeping control over the television and print media, be they in the hands of the current government or of some private individuals or companies, leads to the monopolization of power and implicitly to its usurpation, jeopardizing the free and democratic elections.



*Dumitru LAZUR,  
Association of Independent Press*

# Millions of Lei for the “development” of newspapers docile to state authorities

**In 2006, the municipal and district governments allocated 6,704.9 thousand Lei for the development of local or regional periodical publications.**

The lion's share went to the mouthpieces of the municipalities of Chişinău and Bălţi – 3,200 thousand Lei and, respectively, 324 thousand Lei. This year, district councils have been less generous than the municipal ones, each of them allocating 117 thousand Lei, on the average, to the local newspapers. Print media have been supported best of all, at least in 2006, in Soroca (324 thousand Lei), Căuşeni (264.6 thousand Lei), Cahul and Orhei (237.6 thousand Lei each). On the other hand, the district councils of Ungheni, Nisporeni, Leova, Cimişlia and Basarabasca have not reserved a penny for the local newspapers. At the same time, 660.2 thousand Lei have been allocated from the local budgets for the publication of newspapers in the Gagauz autonomy.

## Who benefits from this money?

Normally, the public money, which is reserved for the development of local press, should be allocated on an open tender basis to all periodical publications published in a municipality or district. The reality, however, is different. As a rule, the tens and even hundreds of thousands of Lei are offered directly to

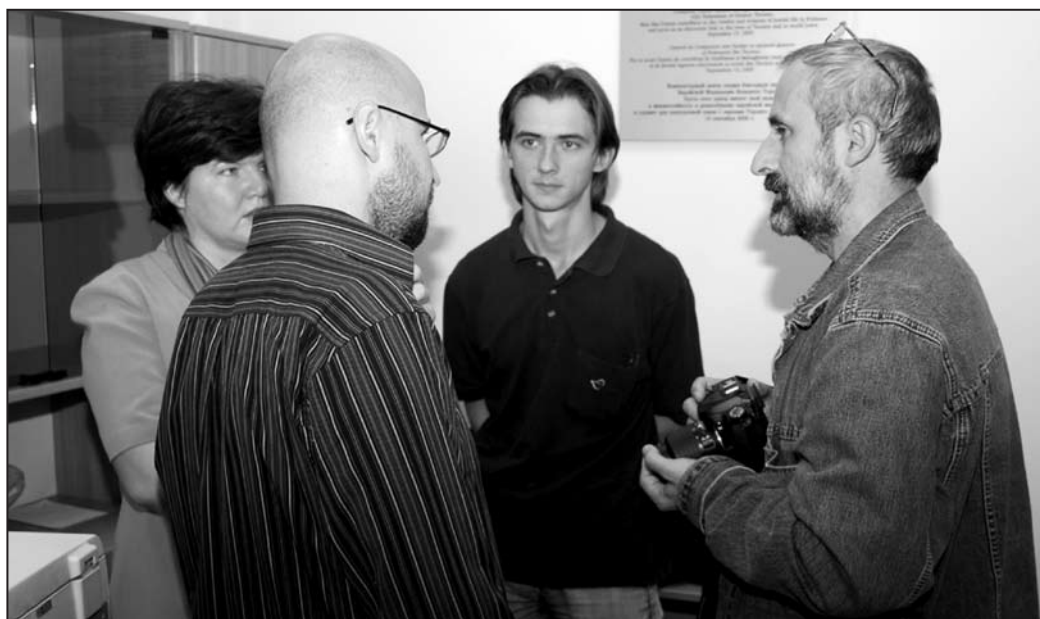
the newspapers founded by the municipal or district councils. Some would say: “this is logical – the parent feeds its child”. However, the logic of the Moldovan local governments is contradictory to the European standards.

The EU/Moldova Action Plan stipulates that “state financial assistance for media should abide by strict and objective criteria equally applicable to all media”. Moreover, the same document says that the state must put in place and implement an “appropriate legal framework guaranteeing freedom of expression and of the media, in line with the European standards and on the basis of the recommendations of the Council of Europe”.

If a public tender were organized for the utilization of this money, I am sure that most independent newspapers would present much more attractive offers than their state competitors. The strengths of the private periodical publications are on the surface: journalists instructed by Western experts, who are not prisoners of the socialist journalism any more, and who can comprehensibly convey the message of the municipal or district authorities, plus the attractive graphic design.

## How is public money used?

According to a resolution on the need for the denationalization of local public press, signed by the Association of



*In the past three years, the Independent Journalism Center has organized many courses for specialized faculty, staff and professional journalists in which they learned modern teaching methods*

Independent Press (API) and Independent Journalism Center (IJC), “the content analyses conducted by local and international organizations during the latest parliamentary election campaign, in March 2005, showed that the public newspapers massively supported the ruling party and discredited its opponents, thus departing from the fundamental principles of functioning of public press”.

Another, more recent, example; I wrote above that 660.2 thousand Lei were allocated in 2006 from the local budgets for the publication of newspapers in the Gagauz autonomy. The monitoring reports on Gagauz public print media for October-November 2006, prepared by API in partnership with IJC, point out that the most covered electoral competitor by the press published from the public money was the autonomy’s current Bashkan Gheorghe Tabunșic. For instance, each issue of the newspaper “Vesti Gagauzii” published at least a picture of the current bashkan. At the same time, the newspaper inserted sometimes integrally or partially the speeches held by Gheorghe Tabunșic within local events. As a rule, the area covered with materials about Tabunșic on the pages of “Vesti Gagauzii” was of hundreds

of square centimeters, whereas the area of materials about the other three candidates registered in the elections was of zero square centimeters. And are these newspapers funded from the taxpayers’ money who, according to the European standards, must be informed objectively about the development of the electoral process?!

#### **And why are councils’ newspapers not denationalized?**

The argument of the Communist Party leaders who, in fact, brought back to life the district publications in 2003, when the counties (judets) were liquidated and the districts (raions) were restored, is banal – “if the local media are denationalized, the local authorities’ voice will not be heard any more”. “We will adopt a law on the denationalization of local press, but you will see in some time that it will not do anything good. It will create an informational void and certain rights will be violated”, the communist Victor Stepaniuc stated in an interview. The ex-chairman of the parliamentary faction of the Communist Party revolted: “Who hinders the civil society and the political parties from creating their own publications?”



*Roxana Teodorcic, Journalism School student, during an exercise in the photojournalism course*



The legislation in force does not place obstacles in the registration of a local newspaper, but the central, municipal or district public authorities will make your life a misery if you manage to capture the readers' attention and, on the top of it all, "dare" criticize the authorities. How? By wrecking "their children", the state publications, and intimidating the independent newspapers. Besides the fact that they "feed" themselves on the taxpayers' money, the councils' newspapers disloyally compete with the independent periodicals. The same API and IJC resolution says that "in some districts, the mayor's offices, state institutions, post offices have the concrete task of subscribing to the newspapers published by the district councils, whereas the independent newspapers face difficulties during subscription campaigns; the advertising is distributed for the benefit of state newspapers; the district councils' newspapers are sold at lower prices than the private ones".

A recent example. At the end of October 2006, Drochia District Council put out a pocket newspaper. The publication, as we expected, praises the district leadership and the ruling party. The chairman of Drochia, Veaceslav Belinschi, was not satisfied with just that. The officer decided to forbid the journalists from the local independent newspaper "Glia drochiană" to write about the official events taking place in the district. How? On 8 November 2006, Belinschi threw out the publication's reporters from the meeting room. With no explanation. The district chairman shouted: "You are free to go, mister correspondent!" That was all. The newspaper's director, Valentina Cibotaru, says it is not for the first time that Belinschi hampers the journalists' access to information.

### Denationalization Law

API and IJC proposed to the Moldovan "media community" to draft and promote a law on the denationalization of

mass media in Moldova, which would ensure equal conditions of professional activity to all media, be they national or local. At least one advantage is on the surface: no more public money will be spent on newspaper publication. The problem, however, is of a different nature. How will the local media be denationalized? By multiplying the "Moldova Suverană" and "Nezavisimaya Moldova" model? By changing the publisher, and not the editorial policy? The "Moldova Suverană" and "Nezavisimaya Moldova" example proves that the ruling party will not give up easily their propaganda tools and will find legal solutions, claimed to be European, for democratization of the media...

### Instead of conclusion

When asked by the Association of Independent Press why the public funds, "reserved" for the development of local media, are not allocated in conditions of maximum transparency, Vasile Tarlev stated that, in accordance with the law on local autonomy and local public funds, it is the district councils, and not the Government, which are responsible for the management of the funds for media development. "The Government does not have the right to get involved. So, the councils decide how and to whom to offer this money. But I think that the local governments should be more transparent. I will personally discuss with the Association of District Chairpersons and with the Association of Mayors that private media not be discriminated ...", the Prime Minister added.

We will find out shortly whether the Prime Minister keeps his word or not. In the fall of 2006, the Government will approve the "funds" allocated by municipalities and councils for media development. After that, the local authorities will decide how much to allocate and to whom. In 2007, the local elections year, it is not likely that the local governors will take the bread out of the mouths of the publications, which sing

Irina MALEVA

## Peacemaking journalists

**One of the projects of the Independent Journalism Center aims at supporting the cooperation between Moldovan and Transnistrian journalists.**

We prepared various materials for publication, repeatedly met within seminars and trainings at IJC, and those meetings were real holidays for us, which we wanted never to end. But the most impressed were the participants in the project "Actions for peaceful relations in the Republic of Moldova", implemented during this year, and especially those selected based on a contest for professionals to undertake two investigation trips – to Georgia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. We all have had a tragic past – the civil war, when the citizens of the same country fought among themselves. This war left blood spots in our cities and towns. The ruins of that war can still be seen on the streets of the Bosnian cities Mostar and Sarajevo; there are demolished buildings in the village of Cocieri and in the Sukhumi resort in Abkhazia, and in many other places...

...The following visited Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ludmila Coval ("Profsoyuznye vesti"), Serghei Melnicenko ("Dnestrovskaia pravda"), Inna Russu ("Pridnestrovie"), Eugen Urșciuc ("DECA-PRES"), Larisa Ungureanu ("Lanterna Magică"), Oleg Banaru ("Acțiunea Civică"). When any conflicts escalate, mass media play a very important role because they still enjoy a lot of trust. This is exactly why the direct contact between the Moldovan and Transnistrian journalists, personal and official contacts, as well as the unofficial ones, help find answers to many questions arising today. Although every media representative, delegated by a certain side, sticks to his position even after hours of discussions, he will at least try, from that point on, to avoid on the pages of his publication such offending expressions as "national-fascists of Moldova" or "bandits-separatists". This attitude has already been proved during the implementation of this program.

As the participants recount, the visit to this country was especially productive and edifying for the journalists from the right and left sides of Nistru. Bosnia-Herzegovina and we both passed, during the breaking up of our countries, through the atrocities of the civil war. Although, if taking into account that the number of population is almost the same (around 3.5 million in 1992) in both states (Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova including Transnistria), the losses, economic as well as in casualties, are incomparable. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the exact number of deaths is not known yet for sure – some sources indicate 100 thousands people, others – 250 thousand. One million citizens of this country, once considered the most prosperous among the socialist countries

– Yugoslavia – became refugees, and even now, after 11 years from the cessation of military actions, most of them have not yet returned home. Many do not even have where to return to because their houses are still lying in ruins, as in Mostar, for instance. This city still remains an unhealed wound, like our cities of Bender and Dubăsari. However, if there was no confrontation on national principles during the Nistru war in our case, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where three main ethnic groups live – Serbs, Bosnians and Croats – nationality was the main factor determining the "enemy".

There is still a long way to go until peace and mutual understanding will be fully established in Bosnia-Herzegovina – the discords among the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians are still undermining the civil society from the inside. And the most striking thing is, as our journalist colleagues told us, that the fiercest ideologists of the confrontations based on the ethnical principle prove to be the heads of the Orthodox and Catholic churches and of mosques, that is, those who by virtue of their positions should call the people to peace and mutual tolerance. Nothing to say about the parties of various orientations – many of their leaders claim that the power should be only in the hands of the representatives of their people.

Among those who truly want to live in peace with everybody around, regardless of their national or religious affiliation, and call the others to this, are the journalists. Representatives of all those three main ethnical groups and of other national minorities work together in each newspaper, TV or radio editorial office, with no exception whatsoever. The nationalities of our Bosnian companions – coordinators of the Sarajevo Media Center, whose leadership invited us there – the charming young ladies Leila Kapetanovich and Masha Dervishevich can also be easily guessed, at least by their names. Masha is Serbian, Leila – Bosnian.

The memories about the civil war tragedies will not fade away too soon. However, by the number of casualties, the two conflicts are incomparable. As incomparable is the toughness of the mutual treatment by the two adverse forces – on a narrow street in Mostar, where two cars can barely drive by each other, one can even today see the broken windowpanes and ruined walls of the houses facing each other. It is not hard to realize that not sub-machine-guns, but at least grenade throwers, were fired. All three involved parties – the Bosnians, the Serbs and the Croats – had concentration camps. Nationality could serve as grounds for being locked up there. Moreover, they were not some camps for keeping people displaced from elsewhere, but were real concentration camps, built on the model of the fascist camps. And the prisoners of those camps had as

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many chances of surviving as did the prisoners during the Second World War. We had the opportunity to speak with journalists – former prisoners of those camps. Despite the horror and nightmares they passed through, they proudly relate that they now work in editorial offices side by side with representatives of all three ethnical groups. This country's journalists were the first ones to overcome the negative, to put it euphemistically, emotions in order to work together for the sake of their country's further prosperity.

As a striking model of a journalist's life can serve the fate of Amela Rebak, who at present is the director of a Mostar radio station, the second one by popularity and coverage in the country, which broadcasts in two languages – Bosnian and Croatian. Being Bosnian by nationality, she was locked up for many months in a Croatian concentration camp and survived by some miracle, and over two years before that she had lived in the besieged city. (The radio station's building is located right on the former front line and adheres to a building not yet fully restored after the war.) After her release, she was offered political asylum in Norway, but after a short period of rehabilitation, she decided to return home, to Mostar, and to continue doing her duty of journalist. Especially that her family tree goes as far back as 560 years.

- Mostar is still a desperate city, she says. And the politicians feed on our fear. We used to be around 120 thousand people back then. Over 40 thousand have left the city. Our duty is to fight this desperation, pleaded for by the leaders of various religious and nationalist organizations, who still have a rather strong influence on the citizens, to find the necessary consen-

sus in order to be together again, and therefore, we endeavor to broadcast only truthful information for our listeners.

Many of the programs of this radio station reveal the secrets of the war; they especially speak about the war crimes, and carefully investigate each case in part. In general, the studio cannot be considered as entirely "focused" on politics. On the contrary, Amela thinks that people are tired of so much politics, and a big part of the airtime is dedicated to the people's daily problems.

The participants found very interesting the visits to the Sarajevo Media Center, very interesting. This Media Center was created in 1995, the founder being the Open Society Fund of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 2000, it was registered as an independent center for research in education and science, and belongs to the same Fund. The Media Center proves by means of concrete actions how a pretty fruitful activity can be revived in a very short period of time and maintained even in very difficult economic conditions. For this purpose, the main concerns have been structured into five areas. Thus, the Investigative Journalism Center prepares future journalists based on various programs, organizes trainings on a diversity of subjects. The Center for Strategic Information offers training in public relations, informational consulting, having the London Strategic Center as its partner. The Informational-Strategic Center represents the archive of print media publications. Besides the data search on the Internet, there is an archive of the newspapers and magazines printed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the former Yugoslavia after 1944 and up to our days, and also the most complete collection of the publications from the period

*The Chişinău  
School of Advanced  
Journalism was opened  
in partnership with the  
Missouri University  
School of Journalism,  
Press Now  
(The Netherlands)  
and the Paris Center  
for the Professional  
Training of Journalists.  
Byron T. Scott,  
University of Missouri  
professor*



of the 1992-1995 war. The Political Center of this Media Center conducts research in media development. Also, very advanced equipment and a team of professionals are made available to all interested parties, as the Media Center also makes audio and video products.

... That unforgettable week spent in Bosnia-Herzegovina passed by very quickly and the day came to say good-bye to our new friends. But the summer passed by as quickly, and we met again in October, this time in Chişinău, at the Independent Journalism Center, within the national conference "Role of the media in the settlement of conflicts", organized with the financial support of the British Government's Russia – CIS Global Conflict Prevention Pool and of the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Moldova. But let us go back now to our colleagues who had traveled to Georgia before us. The official attitude of the Tbilisi leadership to the unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was neither during the summer one of the simplest. According to the correspondent of the radio station "Svoboda", Goghita Aptziauri, and as we also know from other sources, the atmosphere in the region of the Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts is extremely tense at present. Explosions and bursts of gunfire are being heard again, killed and wounded have again been registered. "It is not a secret that the journalists who work in the 'hot spots' are remunerated better than other their colleagues", Goghita said, "but I don't want war!!! I do not want this money but we must work in any conditions, and what I want most of all is for peace finally to be restored in my country". Goghita, in spite of his youth, is a well-known journalist in Georgia, graduate of the Faculty of Journalism of Shida-Kartli University, has worked as correspondent for the newspaper "Goris Moabe" and for the TV companies "Kartli" and "Rustavi-2" in Gori. He has been correspondent for "Svoboda" station since 1998. At the conference, he recounted about the conditions in which Georgian journalists are forced to work today:

- In fact, the negotiations have reached deadlock. The four-sided commission set up to settle the conflict does not do anything. To imagine better the geography of those conflict zones, I would compare them to a chessboard, where the Georgian and Ossetian villages are arranged nearly in the same order to each other. The villages with Georgian population are under the jurisdiction of Tbilisi authorities, and the Ossetian ones – under the jurisdiction of Tshinvali authorities. Police stations are situated in between the villages. Posts of the Russian peacekeepers are also located in the conflict zones. Most of the times, the shooting starts between these posts and ends with the bombing of the villages. Victims are on both sides. As a rule, the parties blame each other for armed provocation. The local population, being afraid lest their houses are bombed, sleep most often in basements. There are a lot of munitions in the conflict zone. These are the conditions in which the journalists do their job. There is a committee in place in Tshinvali, belonging de facto to the Republic of South Ossetia and which is responsible for controlling the media. One can often find in the committee's on-line publications and with information services insulting phrases addressed to the Georgian government and people, who are declared fascists. The Georgian media are also often not right, when, for instance, after some criminal incident, they interfere with all kinds of conclusions, without waiting for the investigation bodies' decision, and call their opponents Ossetian criminals, terrorists and other such insulting names.

Based on the above-said, one inevitably reaches the conclusion that an abyss of distrust is becoming increasingly deeper between the Georgian and the Ossetian people. And trust cannot appear yet, because nobody is approaching this problem seriously. "I was very much surprised when I found out that Transnistrian and Moldovan journalists had come together to my city, Gori, Goghita emphasized. It looks like they can find a



Vasile Botnaru,  
head of RFE/RL's Chisinau  
bureau, is teaching  
the radio journalism course



*The School emphasizes practical skills and focuses on individuals with university degrees working in the media and on beginning journalists*



common language, although they are situated on different sides of the conflict, but are aware that they must fulfill their professional duties, and this has been placed above all other goals or interests. Fortunately, this process proved to be possible here, which, unfortunately, cannot be achieved yet in our country.”

Holding their breath, and I do not exaggerate when I say so, the conference participants watched two documentaries dedicated to the military conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia. The first film – “Together and apart”, produced by the “Internews” Fund, Georgia (presented by the producer Iracli Berulava, graduate of the Faculty of Journalism of Tbilisi University, correspondent for various international agencies, including reporter for the Japanese television and the Russian newspaper “Kommersant”, a wonderful man, of that type of journalists whom you think you have known your entire life) is conceived as a dialogue between a Georgian and an Abkhazian. Before the conflict, both of them worked together at the same scientific research institute in Suhumi, and later they took up arms and fought on different fronts against each other (true story). Thanks to the satellite communication, those two – Koto Sichinava (Tbilisi) and Anatoli Pachulia (Suhumi) had the possibility to converse together for three days. They had

what to say to each other... Anatoli cannot forget the Abkhazians’ victims and suffering, the fact that a lot of youngsters never returned to their villages after the war... Koto cannot forget his native city and is convinced that Georgia will regain its territorial integrity.

Another film, presented by Mamuka Kuparadze, shot by courtesy of the Canadian Embassy to Turkey, reminds the viewers about the business and friendship relations that existed at all times between the Georgians and the Abkhazians: before the war, during the war, and after the war. Three Georgians recount unforgettable situations, which they went through together with several Abkhazians. They recall many examples of friendship and manifestation of best human qualities in extreme conditions.

... The conference participants shared their impressions until late in the evening, benefiting from the opportunity of getting to know each other. In fact, this way of getting to know each other among journalists deserves a separate approach, and we hope to come back to it on the pages of our magazine. And the biggest desire for us, as journalists, as witnesses to and participants in the military conflicts in our countries, is that WE NEVER AGAIN GO THROUGH A WAR.

Nicolae POJOGA

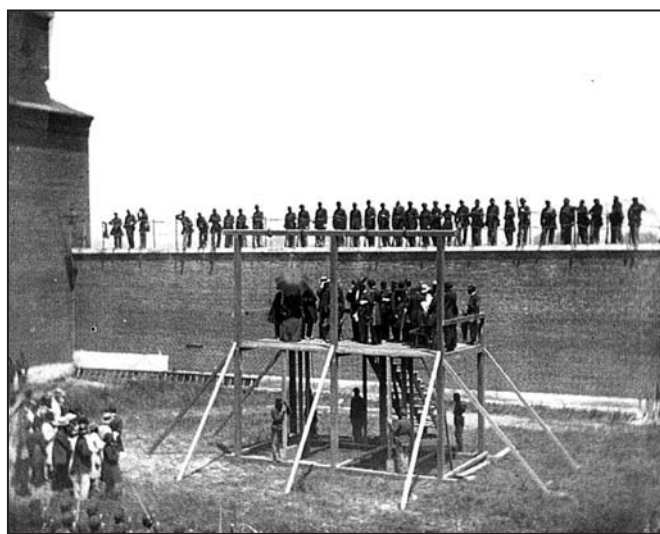
## Images and Words (A Christmas Tale)

**“To the thinking soul images serve as if they were contents of perception. That is why the soul never thinks without an image. The process is like that in which the air modifies the pupil in this or that way and the pupil transmits the modification to some third thing (and similarly in hearing), while the ultimate point of arrival is one, a single mean, with different manners of being.”**

*(Quotation from the English version of On the Soul by Aristotle)*

I have been concerned for a long time about the controversy (it is true, sometimes unstated!) between news “writers” and journalists with cameras. As they have become incompatible, these two professions have entered into a competition on a single subject: the creation of the most perfect images produced with the power of the word and with the tool named (wasting words again) the “objective eye” of the press. In fact, it may not be objective at all! Take these early press photos for example. We distinguish with difficulty dozens of characters involved in the event (1) or individuals (2) with their backs turned to us, the readers.

The situation changed radically in the epochs immediately following. The need for images that exceeded the visual dimension of the event gave birth to and underlies the education of many generations of photographer-reporters who had to satisfy the propagandistic appetites of modern states. The clumsiness of the one who photographed (3) a May Day demonstration in Russia after the Bolshevik coup d'état is almost touching.



*Conspirators on the scaffold, 7 July 1865.  
Gardner Alexander (1821–1882)*

A bizarre procession like a funeral marches down Petrograd's streets, not yet accustomed to such demonstrations. There are many well-dressed people with their backs to us. An individual with a banner that seems to rise from his head is assisting with a grand piano carried by a lorry. It is clear they're singing *l' Internationale* and *la Marseillaise* accompanied by that piano! A little later, during an unprecedented famine and after exploitation and mass deportations, different music was played and different pictures were taken. There is almost nothing troubling about a fanfare in the field at harvest time, a military orchestra by the canal, or folk music during corn weeding...

The photograph becomes bigger than itself: a new reality, distorted, devouring. As for TV images, powerful or overwhelmingly powerful in comparison with the text of the news accompanying them, researchers use the term “cannibalism.” In photography, this horror is much more vibrant and sharp. In press photography, it can reach magic, totemic or even voodoo technical limits. Pay attention to how deeply the photographic image has entered our lives: a phantasmagoric (halogen) impression in the immediate past, digital (absolutely unreal, impalpable) at present and a three-dimensional, holographic in the near future. This type of genetically modified painting follows us day and night, awake or asleep.

“Daddy, why do I not have a picture on my birth certificate?” a child bored in the long queue at the polyclinic asks his father.

“Children grow up very fast, and they do not look any longer like they did in their first days of life,” the wise father says becoming enthralled with an obvious irony. People pass, their photographs remain he wants to say but does not have the courage.

Let us look at it from the other end. What would an on-looker of the past century have to say about a funeral procession featuring a picture of the deceased when he was young!? Later transposed into marble or ceramics, this smile so natural to the photographer from round the corner will become the deceased's “eternity” which is not quite accurate. What should be at the head of the burial procession? Maybe a more serious picture, for example... a mature one with closed eyes and hands folded on the chest!

“It is not Parascheva, chum! It is Saint Varvara because she has a crown on her head...”

“You are saying it as if you were there when her picture was taken...”

At first, that seemed to me a scene good to recount over a glass of beer with my pals, and only later did I realize like the daddy at the polyclinic that the saints of the future will probably be painted from old photographs. We have had until recently all

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*Pictures taken from the book **Russie 1904–1924, La Revolution est la** by E. Baschet*

kinds of photogenic saints (4)! It seems like yesterday when I was also carrying an enlarged photograph in my arms shouting as loudly as I could, “Hurrah!” and, “Long life!” We have now only the hurrah left.

It is the same with humanity, that is, with the press photograph. This is what I wanted to impart in the Christmas tale

saw the image before the words. Probably, they, the images, were generating ideas that were then set forth linearly. I would like to draw only a very few crumbs from this tiny ball of dough: we shall give priority to genuine press pictures. We will let them generate ideas, feelings and words from their own primal force. Never shall we do it the other way around!

for this year, a year in which a photojournalism course was held for the first time at the School of Advanced Journalism. It was also the year in which a university student exclaimed, “So, it means that if we do not have a picture from a certain event, we report the news without it!” It was also during 2006 that an IJC monitoring team scoured many publications in search of “correct” photographs on the subject of human trafficking. Let us also add to this the seminar on the same subject, which also included photographic training. In other words, it has been a year to remember.

Coming back for the sake of symmetry to the quotation at the beginning of this tale, we must attempt an interpretation according to time and place. Ancient people



*Russian peasants holding pictures during a Bolshevik demonstration. Picture by K. Herbert, 1920*

*(Editor's note: Pay attention to the specific elements of the procession, which imitate in detail a church procession. The figure of an Orthodox church can be seen in the upper left.)*

Nicolae POJOGA

# Where to find powerful pictures for a delicate subject?

(Reflections on a seminar organized by the Independent Journalism Center and Winrock International)

Among other aspects of the methods of approaching the subject of human trafficking, the seminar<sup>1</sup> also included a photojournalism training on this subject considered delicate or, most of the times, difficult.

The difficulty comes probably from the perspective of wrong (let us call them “romantic”) interpretations of the mission of press pictures and photography by many of our editors. A study conducted by a monitoring team<sup>2</sup> points out many arguments in favor of this verdict, especially in the part referring to the illustration of materials on the said subject. We will hereinafter try to describe several examples taken over from the mentioned work as well as from various Moldovan publications.

In two articles about individuals kidnapped by Gypsies (Roma) published in a month interval by “Jurnal de Chişinău”, we find two at least “playful” pictures with Gypsies, Gypsy camps, horses, ribbons etc. We can in no way comment this approach of the subject. We do not think that the picture contributes in any ways to the text’s power. Moreover: the pictures taken out from the first drawer or editorial basket seem to contradict entirely the efforts of the stories’ authors. And of the message, in general. It is the case to recall here that in little things like these, the subconscious has more power than the reason. In other words, the a-camp-rising-up-in-the-skies type of “crooning” becomes the attraction and the entire “construction” is ruined.

I learned the story of a girl who was forced to practice begging on the streets of Sankt-Petersburg. Lured with all kinds of promises by some Gypsies from the village, she was taken over by others and, from hand to hand, came to stand begging day and night at metro entrances in that cold and humid city. Nothing of what I saw in these two pictures! Two pictures as big as two sentimental novels, but which say nothing.

The following example, taken over from the collection of the newspaper “Moldova Suverană”, illustrates the account about a woman (Natalia) trafficked with the aid of her own husband. Staggering story! Useless and “weird” picture! I would give a lot to find out the algorithm<sup>3</sup> of appearance of this journalistic “masterpiece”. So that I learn my lesson, as they say! “Nezavisimaya Moldova” also reports about Natalia and her tragic story. Their “Natasha” is also, at least, bizarre. Perversely speaking, the cunning husband who sold his wife could claim damages from both

publications. On the grounds that it does not look like her. Shame on them!

## Why are changes into better not taking place in the field?

We stick to the conviction that the profession of journalist CAN be learned, and that the multitude of efforts in this regard are justified in the end. Thus, the effort directed, or perfectly justified, toward improving the reporting, the quality of the investigation, toward drawing the writing nearer to the European journalism standards becomes, most of the times, visible in the end.

Less in photojournalism, a strong part of the press, but which is being now cast by shadow. Although there are many signs and premises of growth in this field, we are compelled to acknowl-



Fuga

Potrivit fetei, capul familiei a încercat de nenumărate ori să abuzeze sexual de

la Centru, Lucia Golban, Maria este acum mai liniștită, spre deosebire de frica pe care o simțea în primele zile când a fost internată aici, și s-a im-

“Kidnapped by Gypsies”

27 May 2005

and 24 June 2005



1. “Human trafficking in mass media: a new dimension”, Chişinău, IJC, 16-18 November 2006.

2. Winrock Media Monitoring Archive, IJC, 2006.

3. Usually, this is done very simply. The design guy searches through

Google, Yahoo!, or through other searching engines by key words, such as “trafficking”, “woman”, or “kidneys”, “Roma”, then joyfully copies everything he thinks suitable. He does not indicate the source. From chastity or laziness, or both.





*"Moldova Suverana"*  
no. 140,  
29 Sept. 2006

edge that this is still taking place slowly or very slowly. The changes into better are expected especially in the informative, i.e. content, aspect. How relevant in the sense of understanding the organ-trafficking phenomenon<sup>4</sup> in the Republic of Moldova can a symbolic picture be, most of the times selected at random, from sources only partly (if anything like this can exist!) credible? Should we still insist on the documentary (temporal!) values of such pictures?

I know the journalist who came from Paris for "the Mingir case". Right from the airport he took a car to this town, which had become a fairyland, talked with the victim, with the officials, with the supposed involved parties, took some pictures, and finally, sent everything to the publication he works for. In the evening, he was already on the plane flying to Budapest with a bundle of local newspapers in his arms. He wrote me that he had initially kept away from a possible influence from the local press, but now he knew that the "danger was minimal". We spent only two hours in Mingir (I was a guide and sometimes a translator). I think that as much time is required (and here I include the beer, coffee and cigarettes) to search in Google some kidneys adequate for the "course" prepared by a local newspaper. How weird things are sometimes!

### What can we do?

It is simple – stop the practice (even as an experiment) of "illustrating" journalistic texts with random pictures. We simply should not "fit" a "namby-pamby" picture with a serious text any longer. Nor vice versa! There is a simple and not-easy-at-all way of reporting the truth about the phenomenon or case described in the text. Simple, because the facts and the people are right in front of us when we are involved in investigations, preparation of news or reports. Difficult, due to some professional and ethical skills, which

4. It is almost incredible, but in four out of five cases on the phenomenon, I found a kidney as illustration (I cannot guarantee it was one hundred percent human) in the section. Not to forget: in the fifth case I had a picture of some doctors with masks.

5. Here "on any account" does not unfortunately include also the payment in agreement of external photojournalists or even of those from the editorial office.

we should acquire realistically. The level of criticism in this field also leaves much to be desired. The press photograph is still left at the mercy of some editors or shift bosses who are at least refractory (we also call this "perpendicular") with regards to the development, preparation and publication of a photojournalistic material.

Anyway, to those who would like to start a new life, we simply and generously recommend the following:

If we do not have a picture with the people or facts described in the text, we will not put up ANYTHING!

If we are in difficulty (ethical or other) with taking a "powerful" picture, we will limit ourselves to the pictures of officials, heads of specialized NGOs, other public persons.

However, if we want to conquer the reader on any account<sup>5</sup>, we can do it by taking over pictures from credible and serious publications. We will not forget to ask their permission in writing for this purpose, nor will we hesitate to indicate the source precisely. With thanks!

For the realistic ones, we recommend the written and illustrated alternative (or just illustrated with minimum text) of what we call "success stories". It is pleasant work and as pleasant reading!

The photojournalism textbook<sup>6</sup> (Hurrah! we have one in Romanian!) says among others: "We know that it is easy to manipulate by presenting the world in a distorted way or by how the picture is used (its size, place in the newspaper, place within the space it occupies alongside the others). And from this derives the need to develop the skill of distinguishing the truth from lies. From this derives the need for visual alphabetization<sup>7</sup>".

We make here one more recommendation out of the thousands contained in the Basic Textbook<sup>8</sup>: "Do not hesitate to contact the persons from the published pictures to discuss once again the reason for which their pictures had been taken as well as the various reactions to the appearance of those pictures in your newspaper<sup>9</sup>".



*"Nezavisimaya Moldova" 8 Sept. 2006*

6. Gabriela Sandu, Textbook of Photojournalism. Theoretic Aspects. Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004.

7. Ibidem, p. 35.

8. Keneth Kóbré, Photojournalism. The Professional Approach, Fifth Edition, Focal Press, 2004.

9. Ibidem, p. 311.

Vitalie Hadei, Reporter for JURNAL de Chişinău

# Sports press between existence and subsistence

**The sports press is, by its specific character, very popular in the entire world. Less in Moldova. Not only because people do not read, but due to the fact that, even in 15 years after the proclamation of independence, this niche has not been occupied as it should have been or deserved, if you want. On the other hand, we must also take into account the level of the Moldovan sports about which the sports press writes. Or, the press is the mirror reflection of everything that happens around.**

At present, there are only two newspapers writing about sports in Moldova. They are the Russian language daily "Sport Curier" and the Romanian language weekly "Sport plus". The few specialized newspapers have ensured that most newspapers present on the Moldovan media market insert sport rubrics in their pages. Such rubrics are welcome for the simple reason that our people can barely afford to subscribe to a newspaper, and they would like to find everything in it – political, economic, social, cultural, sports etc. news.

The problems of the sports press are, generally, the same as of all Moldovan newspapers – lack of money, few readers, high distribution fees etc. The editors-in-chief of the newspapers "Sport Curier" and "Sport plus" will further discuss the problems of the sports press.

## "It is difficult"

The editor-in-chief of the weekly "Sport plus", Victor Daghi, is aware of the fact that the newspaper he directs does not come up to the level of Romanian or Russian sports press, for instance. "It is very difficult to put out a sports newspaper in Moldova. First of all, we lack the transparency characteristic of Romania, and our people simply do not read the press in general. Another aspect, which I am tired of repeating, is the lack of money for maintaining a newspaper. Young journalists, who come right from the university, are enthusiastic about their work at the beginning. They are happy to run about and satisfied with seeing their names appear in the newspaper. Later, when they see that what they get for their materials does not suffice to cover even transportation costs, they stop showing up at the office. Sometimes, I am compelled to put out a 16-page

newspaper all by myself", Daghi told us. He also thinks that it is hard to conquer the public when the newspaper comes out only once a week.

## "Outdated information"

"You cannot come out once a week and have the most recent events. Sometimes, our newspaper publishes news from events that took place a week before that. TV reporters will, of course, broadcast the news on the same day, and in a week, everybody will laugh at us for reporting that event. We can find new elements and update the reportage, but it is very hard, especially that things can change from one day to another. If we gave up covering the events, which had taken place two or three days before, we would in fact have nothing to publish about the sports in our country", the editor-in-chief of the weekly "Sport plus" thinks. But there is something he is happy about – the newspaper's print-run has increased by 1,500 copies in the past year.

## "No public, no progress"

The newspaper "Sport Plus" was founded by the National Olympic Committee in 2002. The publication had a print-run of 1,000 copies at that time. "As a matter of fact, sales were accounting for only 300 copies in the entire country, and the rest 700 were returns. We now have a print-run of 2,000 copies and, practically, no returns. Somebody may find this print-run ridiculous, but, for us, it is quite an achievement when the newspaper sells out and we have to increase the print-run by 100 or 200 copies. It is difficult, but I hope that the young generation, whom I notice to be speaking only about sports events, will read sports newspapers, and we will do our best to make the newspaper as attractive and interesting as possible. When you do not have a public that would look out for you, would criticize you, you cannot progress", Daghi added.

## "Nothing to write about"

In his turn, the editor-in-chief of the daily "Sport Cu-



rier”, Veaceslav Romanescu, thinks that there is no sports press in Moldova, although he has been putting out a Russian language sports newspaper since 1995. “What we do is not sports press, and I can explain why. We will not have sports press for as long as we do not have competitive sports in Moldova. How can we write something that would interest the reader if there is nothing to write about? Only small events take place here, which the readers do not even want to hear about. They are simply not interested. On the other hand, the responsible parties from sports federations think that they do a lot. They sometimes insist that we cover their activities, which do not contribute in any ways to an increase in the level of sports in our country”, Romanescu thinks. He has funded the newspaper “Sport Curier” for 11 years from his own money.

### “We are becoming dependent”

Another problem of the newspaperpersons writing about sports is their impossibility to travel to sports events taking place abroad. “Normally, we should have a budget that would allow us to send a person to the Olympic games or to the championships in which our sportspersons take part, but, for the time being, we cannot afford it. If you want to go on such trips, you must write nice things about one or another leader, so that you can ensure yourself a place within the delegation. Sometimes, you have to do this because, otherwise, you cannot provide on-site coverage of an event of special significance for your country. And here you become dependant on that someone. You are already not master of yourself and become subjective. This is another big problem of the sports press, which is hard to get rid off”, the experienced sport journalist reveals unknown details.

### “No advertising”

A solution for making money is, as we know well, selling advertising in the newspaper, but Romanescu assured us that businesses are not interested in buying advertising in a sports newspaper with a print-run of only 5,000 copies. “Many colleagues tell me I should increase the newspaper’s print-run, but this will not change the situation. These are additional paper and printing costs. The more so as I am sure that businesses will not invade us with advertising, nor will the number of readers increase. I am certain of this, as I tried to increase the print-run before, but I had only to “gain” in returns”, Romanescu adds.

### “Sport Curier” in Romanian did not work

The daily’s editor-in-chief made an attempt to bring out “Sport Curier” also in Romanian, but he did not have a chance of success. “Because I live in Moldova, I tried to put out also the Romanian version of the newspaper, but it did not work. Romanian language sports press has practically no readership. I lost some money with this experiment, too, and that is why I gave up”, Romanescu confessed, having another grief in his heart.

### Qualitative sports press – only in 30 years

Romanescu is convinced that sports journalism can also be dangerous. “As we know, it is influential persons that cannot stand criticism who invest in sports most of the times. If you are brave and want to publish a piece of information that touches the interests of these persons, you risk to have your skull broken or, God forbid!, to be killed. I hope that things will change in a few years and there will be more transparency in the Moldovan sports, and the young sports journalists will have the courage to call things by their true name. Only in this way will the sport, as well as sports press, increase in value. Competitive sports and sports press cannot exist separately. Our sports leaders should also understand this but, unfortunately, the situation is different. That is, a very poor sport gets a sports press alike. Romania, Ukraine and Russia are much ahead us at this chapter, too”, Veaceslav Romanescu added. In his opinion, we will have a qualitative sports press only in 30 years.



Chişinău Press Club, November 2006

# Our main political orientation is common sense and democratization of the society

*Answers of the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Severnaya provintsia" ("Northern Province"), Slava Perunov, to "MM" questions*

## Our readership

"Severnaya provintsia" ("SP") is destined for a large circle of readers curious to learn first of all what is happening in our city and in the region. We strive to ensure that the informational aspect prevails, so that the newspaper is useful and, to some extent, entertaining. According to the results of some sociological surveys, "SP" has an almost equal number of male readers and female readers. We are read especially by the category of people aged between 25 and 55 years old. The pensioners, being probably used to the soviet-type press, are less attracted by our newspaper. In addition, we are not even too accessible to this category due to the relatively high price (3.5 Lei). We try to write first of all for the readers who are not indifferent, and we hope we have already found them.

## Political orientation

Our main political option is common sense and democratization of the society. We do not support any specific party. In addition, "SP" employees are forbidden to become members of a party or of a political movement.

In principle, "SP" is more of a social, rather than political, newspaper – in the provinces, be it even in the northern capital, pure politics is done much less than in Chişinău, and therefore, there is not much of it on the newspaper's pages. I am certain that politics cannot become a high-interest subject for a regional publication, more important to us being many other issues, about which we do our best to write as professionally as possible.

Of course, during the local or parliamentary election campaigns, the number of political materials increases. And this is because, first of all, we write about the importance of the elections (voting procedure, voting conditions, structure of electoral bodies etc.), about the parties involved in the elections, about the need to participate in the elections etc. Besides, we publish a lot of paid electoral advertising during the campaigns, which is marked as such, so that the readers know about it.

## Attraction of readers

From my point of view, there are two possibilities to attract a higher number of readers: 1) diversify the topics approached in the newspaper; 2) widen the geographic area of distribu-



*Slava Perunov, winner of the prize "Top 10 Journalists of 2005" in the category "local press" awarded by the Independent Journalism Center and Press Freedom Committee*

tion. The readership can also be increased by means of various contests and events organized by the editorial office. We try to write about what can be interesting both for men and women, for the young and the elderly, for businesspeople and housewives.

At present, if we judged from the presence of the various groups among our readers, we are succeeding in attracting them, although we still have great reserves, but I will speak about this further.

## Geography of distribution of "SP"

The most part of the print-run (90%) is distributed in the municipality of Bălţi, and the rest of the copies – throughout the 10 district centers in the north of Moldova. The largest part of the print-run is sold through private distributors even in Bălţi. We maintain good cooperation with the local branches of "Poşta Moldovei" and "Moldpresa". It is a little more complicated with the distribution through the districts. Most of the times, we send the copies with the route bus, and thus, the newspaper comes out in kiosks a day later. But if we sent them centrally, through "Poşta Moldovei", they would get there even later, because they would have to go to Chişinău first, and after that – to the districts. In this regard, we had a rather sad experience, when the newspaper printed on Wednesday was reaching the districts only on the following Monday. Of course, in



such conditions, the readers refused to subscribe to our newspaper again.

Another delicate problem is that most of the store managers do not want to cooperate with us as newspaper retailers. The reason is that they do not want to have to deal with our “petty ware” (20% of the price of 0.7 Lei for a copy). Unfortunately, they do not realize that it is an additional service for their store, which could attract new clients. It is known that our private business is still at an early stage of development, when people want to get fast and large revenues, and there are few of those willing to invest in services and small businesses. Nonetheless, we will continue to open new retail outlets, and we have already prepared a project for the non-stop sale of “SP” at petrol stations, the next step being probably the sale in supermarkets.

### Staffing

The staffing problem consists in the fact that there is no professional staff in this field. If you can relatively easily find an accountant or a lawyer, it is much harder to find, for instance, a journalist for the independent press, a press manager, an advertising salesperson, a designer or a photographer, which simply do not exist in our city. We have to study everything by ourselves with the help of specialized literature, by participating in various seminars and trainings, traveling for exchange of experience to the editorial offices of more advanced newspapers in more developed countries.

When we have new vacancies, we publish announcements in the newspapers about new job openings and ask help from the placement service, interview the candidates, ask them to fill out certain questionnaires, and then hire them, on a contract-basis, for a probation period. We further observe how suitable they are for us inasmuch as their professional abilities and human qualities concern (which is very important in our team), how much they want to learn this profession, if they have a creative thinking and tend to self-improvement, then they stay in the team.

### Relations with local authorities

The relations with the local authorities are very complicated. In fact, I would characterize them as being a kind of “mutual and balanced platonic love”, that is, these feelings have not yet reached the physical intimacy stage – they do not avenge themselves physically on us, neither do we label them with groundless accusations. We cooperate with many of them for the sake of the readers’ interest, and reach certain reasonable compromises with others, but this does not work most of the times with the representatives of the top echelon of Balti authorities.

They (the echelons, locomotive and wagons) are used to a different type of journalism – a mouthpiece that would make propaganda and agitation. Criticism is most of the times interpreted by them as being carping and they do not want to regard the press first of all as their supporter in building a normal civil society and in eliminating various drawbacks, including from their own activity. Therefore, they display permanent anger, indignation or, on the contrary, total ignoring of our materials dedicated to their activity.

Unfortunately, a great fear reigns among our public officers of not making certain information public. They are ready to mark as top secret any information, sometimes even the most insignificant, and, even when they make it available to us, they want to rest assured that we would not disclose the source. The official power, having the local television and newspaper “in their pocket”, which are funded from the public budget, do not bother to invite the independent press to various city events and meetings, and so, we are compelled to obtain information through confidential sources. Due to such a behavior of the local authorities, the city hall’s information about certain important changes in the city’s life (such as the schedule of interruption of water or electricity supply, the program of certain holidays, announcements about “direct phone lines” and live broadcasts of city leaders) are published, to the citizens’ disadvantage, only in “their” press.

### Access to information

All these problems arise only due to the rather difficult relations we have with the authorities. The officers ignore each time the Law on Access to Information and sometimes hide even the most insignificant things. Unfortunately, the newspaper does not have a legal division, which would allow us to follow much more carefully the cases of denial of access to information and sue the responsible officers. We hope to be able to do this in the future. If we are refused access to one piece of information or another, we announce the reader in the newspaper about such refusals. In some cases, this has an immediate effect; the guilty party is reprimanded “from above”, after which they change their behavior into better. In some cases, we are forced to go directly to the higher authorities. As it happened, for example, with our new city police captain, who fully cut off once all our information sources from under his subordination, but after we had a meeting on this case with the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, the situation changed in our favor.

### Advertising

In order to keep in touch with the advertising suppliers, we have set up a special division where six people work – the head of the division, the secretary responsible for advertising and

four advertising salespersons. To make contact with the suppliers, we have issued full-color media kits containing information about our newspaper and our circle of readers, pricelists and discounts. In addition, we usually give out various souvenirs – calendars, pens with the newspaper's logo, notebooks etc. as gifts to our advertising suppliers and potential clients. The advertising salespersons work and are remunerated on a contract basis; the head of the division and the secretary have fixed salaries and they also benefit from certain commissions from the amount of the contracts signed with the suppliers. At the same time, we also cooperate with Chişinău advertising agencies and with the Association of Independent Press, as an advertising agency. Some advertising suppliers sponsor certain columns in the newspaper as well as contests, offering prizes in money and objects to the winner-readers.

We try to maintain warm partnership relations with our advertising suppliers – we do not forget to send holiday greetings to their teams, and birthday greetings – to their managers. Many of them later become sponsors of various events organized by “SP” in the city (annual exhibition “Memory Photographs”, international children's football championship for the “SP” Cup, caricature exhibition “Satirical Pen” etc.). We work on a barter basis with the media advertising suppliers: “SP” advertises them, and they – “SP”.

#### **General problems related with the political climate and with the legislation**

The first problem consists in the existence of state press in our country, which creates disloyal competition to the private publications, a lot of money being spent on praising the state authorities of various levels.

The second problem is that the authorities do not understand the social function of the press, and that it is necessary to provide certain tax incentives in the period of assertion of this new type of press. But, for the time being, newspapers are, according to the legislation in force, a product not different from sugar, potatoes or fuel. However, there are certain limitations here, too – in order to be VAT exempt, the newspaper must not include more than 30% of advertising in its pages. We must also pay an advertising tax. I think that the truly independent newspapers that are should be exempt

from taxes for at least five years, so that the saved money is spent on buying equipment that would ensure its further development.

The third problem consists in the fact that the current leadership of our state pleads for democratization and European values only in words, but in reality, it does not need a truly independent press. It does not need such a tool of the democracy, as the fourth power. It is more convenient for the current authorities to have “pocket” media, which are easy to manipulate. This is, probably, where all the problems faced by our mass media come from.

#### **“SP” development plans**

1. We would like to grow from a city newspaper, as we are now for the most part, into a regional newspaper not only by the area of distribution, but also by content. For this, we will try to add, as from 1 January 2007, four more pages to include information about the districts from the vicinity of Bălţi. We also plan to create special correspondent offices in Drochia, Făleşti, Sângerei and Râşcani, to provide us with articles on local subjects.
2. We are also thinking about issuing “Northern Province” in Romanian. We are looking now for sponsors for this project, because it will be unprofitable at the beginning, as we will incur translation and equipment costs, and the cost price will be rather high due to the small start-up print-run, as compared to the Russian language version.
3. We also plan to launch next year a commercial project of our newspaper, an entertaining topical supplement “Take a break!” where we will publish various games, contests, crossword puzzles, social news, entertaining-cognitive materials, tests etc. We plan this supplement to come out on Thursday and to be profitable enough as to cover the rest of “SP” publication costs.
4. We would like to finally launch, after the New Year's, our own website, which will be interactive and renewed every day.
5. We have started to create our own newspaper distribution network at petrol stations. And as they work non-stop, we hope to succeed in increasing sales not only geographically but also temporally.